Who Were the Bowmen of Crecy?

Archery

IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

RICHARD WADGE

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Money in Medieval England

The basic unit of currency in medieval England was the silver penny. There were twelve pennies to a shilling, and twenty shillings to £1 sterling. In addition, the mark was an official unit of currency used in fines and accounts worth 13/-4*d* or 160 silver pennies. No mark or half-mark coins were issued in England in the medieval period.

The penny could be divided into fractions: half-pennies and quarter-pennies, known as farthings, were made by clipping pennies. Officially issued silver half-pennies exist, the earliest found dates to Henry I's reign, and silver farthings have also been found, with the earliest dating from Edward I's reign. The cut coins remained in use besides the officially issued small coins because silver half-pennies and farthings seem to have been too rare to be effective small change.

What was the silver penny worth? It is meaningless to convert it to its modern decimal equivalent, but it is very useful to give some idea of what it meant to men and women of the time. In the middle of Edward I's reign, archers and labourers could earn 2*d* per day in the king's service. This was twice what an agricultural labourer might get paid, although the agricultural labourer would probably get a daily meal as well. A carpenter's wage at the same time was about 3*d* per day. Many other craftsmen earned a similar amount. A labourer would struggle to support a family on his wages, whereas a carpenter would not.

Most rural people expected to grow some or all of their food, whereas town dwellers often had less chance to do so. It is, however, difficult to get an idea of food prices at the level of individual loaves or weights of meat. Bread and ale prices were controlled by law from Henry III's reign onwards, in an attempt to ensure the staples of the medieval diet were affordable. At the end of the thirteenth century a hen seems to have been valued at about 1*d* at the most – more valuable for its eggs than as a meal.

I

Popular Archery after the Norman Conquest

Between the Norman Conquest of 1066 and the Black Death in 1348–50 the people of England and Wales produced archers and bows of such power and capability that they became a significant factor in European history, to the amazement of contemporary chroniclers. This has been much discussed by historians, but no clear picture of popular archery in medieval England and Wales has emerged to explain how this came about. Archery is an activity that developed in nearly all cultures and peoples for millennia. The Australian Aborigines are the most significant exception to this. Examples of the traditional use of self bows of different lengths are widespread, and can be found throughout history in four continents until the last quarter of the previous millennium.

Archery had been practised in the British Isles for something like four millennia before 1066. Perhaps the earliest evidence of the significant use of archery in war was found during the excavations at the Neolithic fort at Carn Brea near Redruth in Cornwall. About 700 flint arrowheads were found, many of them Neolithic leaf-shaped heads, and the largest concentration was around the probable site of one of the gateways into the fort. While the excavator observed that it is impossible to guess the nature of the warfare evidenced by the arrowheads, he felt that it was almost certainly fighting among the various Neolithic communities of the area and that the assault on the fort took place at some point in the mid third millennium BC.[1]

Despite this long history of popular archery in the British Isles, its use in warfare ebbed and flowed as various cultures arrived or developed. In general, although archery was used in hunting throughout the long period starting with the Neolithic period, it remained peripheral to the development of military practice. But some

combination of circumstances after the irruption of the Normans into British history led to the development of both the skills and the equipment necessary for longbow archery to become a revolutionary change in Western European military practice. The three most commonly quoted reasons for this development are: the importance of archery in the Norman victory at Hastings, albeit using bows less than man height in length; the unpleasant experiences of Welsh archery suffered by both English armies in the decades before the Conquest and the Norman armies after it; and the Norse tradition of longbow archery in those parts of England and Scotland heavily influenced by the Vikings. But these factors alone aren't enough of an explanation. All three applied in Ireland: Norse settlements; experience of the effectiveness of the Welsh archers; and military leaders who understood the usefulness of military archery. Yet the Irish themselves did not develop a military practice exploiting powerful hand bows despite their experiences on the receiving end of it. The Anglo Norman community in Ireland continued to develop military archery to the extent that there are records of companies of archers from Ireland being included in English royal armies in the fourteenth century. It most certainly was not for want of good bow wood in Ireland since yew bowstaves were imported from Ireland to England between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries. One reason for the lack of development of archery in medieval Ireland was because the population of England at large seem to have practised archery for sport and hunting more commonly than was the case in Ireland in the Middle Ages.

But the evidence of what was going on in Ireland is very important, because Ireland has provided that rarest of archery-related archaeological finds, a medieval yew bow from before the Tudor period. One complete bow has been found that dates to the period of the Anglo Norman invasions of that island in the twelfth century.

An understanding of the development of popular archery in England of the twelfth, thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries can be built up by looking at the eclectic collection of records mentioning archery that have survived. These include court records of criminal activities; wills and inventories that show men owning bows; records of sports and pastimes; accounts of hunting, most of it illegal, and military archery. Archaeological finds are important because they show actual practice unfiltered by legal scribes, chroniclers or any other observer. But these are a bit 'one sided' consisting almost entirely of arrowheads; finds of bows, arrowshafts and bone or leather archery accessories are very rare, as are finds of artefacts made of organic material in general. As yet there have been no finds of anything that might be archery butts confirmed for the period 1066–*c.*1350. Then

there are all the statutes and orders that both encourage the ownership of bows and arrows and restrict their use. Artistic representations showing archers with their bows and arrows include manuscript illustrations, church wall paintings and a few carvings, but these come from a time before rigid representational art. Finally there are any records or events that give an insight into the value that was put upon archery skills. Taken together the activities described in these records and a study of the various artefacts make up a patchwork picture of popular archery before the successes of Edward III's reign made the practice of archery part of the nation's self image.

Bows and Arrows in Medieval England

It is not easy to find evidence of widespread popular archery in England before the thirteenth century. More evidence becomes available in that century and in the first half of the fourteenth century leading up to the great victories of Edward III's reign. But there still isn't any consistent surviving evidence of the widespread use of heavy bows, that is bows with a draw weight of at least 110lbs (50kg), the estimated minimum draw weight of the *Mary Rose* bows.[2] In fact, the evidence from before Edward III's reign does not even suggest that all archers habitually used 'longbows', that is bows about 6ft (1.83m) long. For much of the period when the military reputation of the English and Welsh archer was becoming established in Europe, the term longbow was anachronistic, since it is first recorded in the mid-fifteenth century.[3] Before then, written records, whether official accounts, inventories or chronicles record just two sorts of bow, crossbows and bows. The Latin word *arcus* is used for a bow, which really just describes its shape. It is used for a hand bow of whatever length, and at some points in this book the term hand bow is used to make a clear distinction from crossbows in use at the same time. In line with this, the term archer will only be used to mean men using hand bows, those using crossbows are crossbowmen. Some of the evidence suggests that ordinary men commonly used shorter bows, maybe 4½–5ft (1.37–1.52m) in length in this period, although at the same time there are a very few records that make clear mention of men using bows 6ft or more (1.83m) in length. The widespread use of lighter shorter bows also becomes apparent from the discussion of medieval arrowheads. Many of the surviving arrowheads have a socket size of about 0.35in (9mm) or less, realistically allowing them to be used only on fairly light shafts, which in turn means that they were used with fairly light bows. Arrows of this size would not work well with bows with draw weights similar to those found on the *Mary Rose* because they would not have been stiff enough to cope with

forces generated by these bows. The diameters of the arrow shafts from the *Mary Rose* range between 0.43in and 0.5in (11mm and 13mm) at the head end.[4] Arrowheads found at Camber Castle, Rye, which are more or less contemporary with the sinking of the *Mary Rose*, also have an average socket diameter of about 0.5in (12.6mm).[5] Taken together these figures confirm that the medieval fletchers knew what modern heavy bow archers have worked out, that it easy to make arrows for heavy bows using shafts of between 0.47in and 0.5in (12mm and 13mm) because you know that all the arrowshafts will tolerate the forces involved in being shot from such a bow without time-consuming work weighing and selecting arrowshafts. Given the large quantities of arrows made for military use in medieval England in response to royal orders often at fairly short notice, economy in the use of the fletchers' time was vital.

There is no evidence to contradict the long-held view that the indigenous bow type in Western Europe is the self bow. Traces of laminated bows in ancient and medieval Western Europe arise in three ways: bows used by men hired from, or invading from, further east; equipment brought back by the Crusaders or by travellers; bows used by the Saracen population in medieval Sicily and Italy. Evidence of different lengths of self bow being used in Europe does not mean that long bows and short bows developed as different types of bow. In large part it arose from the availability of bow wood, the skill of the bowyer and that of the archer. It is quite possible that many of the bows used in the activities described in the following chapters were not made by craftsmen bowyers, but by general woodworkers or even the archer himself. This would have been most likely when the archer belonged to the broad class of peasants.

The most substantial pieces of evidence for the widespread use of short bows are the Bayeux Tapestry and the finds from excavations at Waterford and Limerick. Both of these are widely regarded as reflecting the same tradition, that of Norman or Northern French military archery. An experienced war leader like William of Normandy clearly considered these 'short bow' archers an important part of his invasion force. As far as one can tell from accounts of the battle at Hastings their tactical role was to launch showers of arrows to disconcert and disrupt the opposing forces, inflicting as many injuries as the opposing forces' protection allowed, making the onslaught of infantry or cavalry more effective. It is likely that they were not expected to inflict mass slaughter. The tactical role of the English and Welsh longbow men in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was more ambitious; they inflicted injury or death on many of their opponents until expensive armour was developed to resist their arrows. The major difference in the roles of the archers in the Norman

army at Hastings and the English and Welsh longbow archers of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was that the Norman archers did not have the power to make an opposing army wilt or provoke them into desperate charges in the way that the longbowmen could. Without wishing to belittle the skill or military value of the archers in the Norman armies in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, it is difficult to believe that men needed to practise as much to use these short bows effectively as was necessary to use a heavy warbow. Therefore their presence and usefulness did not depend on there being a substantial tradition of popular archery in the archers' home countries in the way that the use of the English warbow did.

Life in Medieval England

Any study of a human activity such as popular archery, the practice of archery by the ordinary mass of the population of medieval England who are almost invisible to history as individuals, needs to be put into the context of what life was like for these people. Firstly, how big was the population in the period from the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries? The compilation of the Domesday Book in 1086 has allowed historians to estimate that the population at the time was about 2.2 million of which over 90 per cent lived in the countryside. By the start of the fourteenth century the population had grown between two and threefold to at least 5 million, with between 80 and 85 per cent living outside the towns and cities.[6] This meant that the growth in the population was largely due to the growth in the numbers of the rural peasantry.[7] The rural population fell into two groups, the free and the unfree, often called serfs. These were unfree in the sense that they owed labour dues to their immediate 'landlords', were not meant to travel without the lords' permission and were to a large degree under the jurisdiction of these lords' courts, although they were beginning to gain some limited rights of access to the King's courts. By the thirteenth century there is strong evidence that a customary understanding of rights, services owed and fines due had developed between the peasants and their lords which meant that matters were not as oppressive as they appear from a twenty-first century perspective. Serfs were not a uniform 'class' but fell into two groups. Villeins made up about 40 per cent of the rural population and held enough land to feed themselves and their families and even produce a surplus for sale. Bordars and Cottars represented about 30 per cent of the rural population, and held small landholdings which were insufficient to feed their families. They had to add to the produce from their landholding with income from all sorts of wage labour just to survive.[8] There tended to be a higher proportion of serfs

in the Midlands and Southern counties than was the case in the Northern and Eastern counties. The majority of these peasants lived in villages and hamlets. The rapid growth of the population between *c*.1100 and *c*.1300 was mirrored by a large increase in the number of towns in the same period. These increased from *c*.100 in the eleventh century to *c*.830 by *c*.1300 in the whole of Britain, with the vast majority of these being found in England.[9]

The increase in the population and in the number of towns also stimulated an increase in the number of markets. All the towns would have markets and many villages also had a weekly market. Medieval lawyers declared as a rule of thumb aimed at ensuring the financial viability of town markets that the residents of a town could object if it was proposed to establish another market within a 6.75-mile radius.[10] As a result much of the rural population had access to a thriving local market. But another important consequence of the increase in the number of towns was that the rural population had more access to skilled craftsmen since these could find enough work to earn a living in the area of a town, whether they lived in it permanently or travelled from town to town. As regards archery, while it is very unlikely that a specialist bowyer or fletcher lived in most towns in the early fourteenth century, it is probable that town smiths had an effect on the types of arrowhead in use in the surrounding countryside.

The laws which controlled the ownership of weapons in general and bows and arrows in particular are discussed in detail in *The Law of Archery before the Black Death*.

But life for a medieval peasant wasn't just a matter of endless toil, they had a lot of holidays. Since God rested on the seventh day, the Church insisted that man should also have a day of rest, so work was forbidden on Sundays. In addition there were between forty and fifty religious festivals and holidays a year when most or all work was also forbidden.[11] So the medieval peasant had more holidays than we do! The religious festivals and holidays included 'Church Ales' at a parish level, and major saints' days on a grander scale. The people enjoyed these and celebrated them with parades and plays. Sundays and religious holidays became very important in the development of popular archery since these days of rest were when ordinary men could indulge in sports. A few accounts of these popular sporting activities can be found below. From 1363 onwards, the King and Parliament issued proclamations and statutes to try to limit popular sports to archery for the benefit of the country, but before that, in the period this book considers, there seemed to be less interference with popular sports.

So, two questions arise: Firstly, *how* did the tradition of popular archery develop among the English and Welsh to such a degree that

Edward III could field an army in the Crecy campaign of 1346 that, by the time of the Battle of Crecy itself, included perhaps 6,500 archers using bows of sufficient draw weight to devastate the Genoese crossbowmen and then shoot down the French knights' warhorses and possibly considerable numbers of the knights themselves?[12] But that was not all, at the same time as Edward was marching through northern France towards Crecy, the Archbishop of York managed to raise enough men, including a considerable proportion of archers, to defeat King David of Scotland at the Battle of Neville's Cross. The events of 1346 make clear that there were substantial numbers of men available to serve as military archers. This is a big point. Men are not able to use heavy bows effectively without putting in a lot of practise. Most men in medieval England and Wales were in the habit of regular often heavy physical work from a fairly young age, as their skeletons show. As a result they were fit and strong despite the risks of disease and a sometimes very limited diet. But they would still have to practise. In many ways the long bow is a most unlikely weapon to become the main weapon of an army in the Middle Ages because it requires so much consistent practise in comparison with staff weapons. What was it in the English and Welsh character that made ordinary men choose this most difficult of options?

The second question is; is it possible to determine *when* the stages in the growth of popular archery happened? How much were Englishmen in the years after the Norman Conquest able to practise archery, or did the Normans try to prevent it for fear of trouble from their new subjects? How widespread had the practise of archery become by the early 1340s, or did Edward III's spectacular successes in that decade alter the popular opinion of archery so that a higher proportion of men took it up? Did the tales of these victories and the riches that archers could gain as booty in France lead those ordinary men who were practising archery with ordinary bows of varying lengths and qualities as their legal duty under the Statute of Winchester to decide that this was not enough, and that they would go on to develop archery skills using heavy warbows?

Whatever the answers to these big questions may be, it is absolutely clear is that by the 1360s the king, the magnates and the Parliament of England perceived that warbow archery was vital to the defence of the kingdom, and to successful military adventures in Europe. Most of the evidence we have for the development and practise of archery and its official encouragement comes from after the glory days of Edward III's reign. The first royal proclamation requiring the practise of archery that can be found in the official records was made in June 1363, a time when England and France were technically at peace as a result of the Treaty of Bretigny made three years earlier. Thereafter in

the fourteenth, fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, proclamations and statutes were made at irregular intervals which aimed to encourage the practice of archery specifically for the defence of the realm. In the latter half of the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth century these were interspersed with statutes and proclamations which tried to control both the supply of bowstaves from abroad and price of bows within the kingdom. In a statute made in 1511–12, Henry VIII even tried to direct where bowyers should live in an attempt to ensure that Englishmen everywhere in his kingdom had easy access to bows so that they could practise for war.[13] All these laws and statutes had the purpose of maintaining the archery tradition that the kings, nobles and Parliament wanted to see exist in England and Wales in these centuries.

In seeking the answer to these questions, it should be possible to get some idea of how far the men of medieval England and Wales developed their tradition of popular archery for themselves and how far they were led and encouraged into it by the kings and nobles.

The skills of the military archer developed in a period in the British Isles which was dominated by three events of undeniable historical significance: the Norman Conquest in 1066; the signing of Magna Carta in 1215 and the Black Death in 1348–50. All three had a significant effect on the ordinary man and woman of medieval England. The Conquest introduced new kings, nobles and local landholders as lords of the manors, the majority of whom could barely speak the language of the mass of the ordinary people, and a number of laws which discriminated against the English. The survivors of the men who had held lands as nobles and leading local landholders under the Anglo-Saxon kings, usually called thegns, found themselves with much reduced holdings and a less influential position in society under the Norman kings. Carpenter has summarised their position writing 'Most [men of status of king's thegn pre conquest] held just a few hides of land, but they were also probably local officials – huntsmen, foresters, sheriffs bailiffs – and thus significant.'[14] A goodly number of these are listed in Domesday Book. So the mass of the population of England found themselves owing services and dues to men they viewed as alien, while the leaders of society that they recognised and could communicate with worked for the new landholders and helped implement the changes that the Norman Conquest brought to England. The barons, churchmen and nobles who drafted and negotiated Magna Carta were openly concerned with restricting royal prerogative powers, and re-establishing what they claimed to see as a Golden Age in England when the king ruled within the law and with respect for tradition. But Magna Carta also had the probably unintended consequences of giving the mass of the

population both free and unfree more secure legal rights and remedies. Finally the Black Death was a catastrophe that we can barely comprehend. In three years, 1348–50, it killed about 40 per cent of the population. But this death toll gave the survivors a broad range of opportunities. In simple terms, there was a shortage of people. Men were not scarce enough that peace reigned between England and France, the great victory at Poitiers, where the archers made a huge contribution to the Black Prince's success, happened after the Black Death. But the real consequences were felt in the rest of the fourteenth century when it became difficult for landlords to hang on to their tenants both free and unfree. So there was a noticeable degree of both geographic and economic mobility among the population at large despite legal restraints on both wage levels and movement.

Looking back over a millennium how is it possible to see how popular archery developed in medieval England? In part by taking a very old-fashioned approach to history. As Karen Armstrong put it 'Since the eighteenth century, we have developed a scientific view of history; we are concerned above all with what actually happened. But in the pre-modern world, when people wrote about the past they were more concerned with what an event meant'.[15] The whole point of what follows is not to provide an account of illegal hunting by ordinary people, or to study medieval crime, but to discover what these activities signify in the story of popular archery in medieval England before the great days of the archer in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

Notes

1 Mercer R.J., 'Excavations at Carn Brea, Ilogan Cornwall 1970–73' (*Cornish Archaeology*, Vol.20, 1981)

2 See Hildred, A. (ed.), *Weapons of Warre: The Armaments of the Mary Rose* (Portsmouth, Mary Rose Trust, 2011) pp.616–29. For a discussion of the draw weights of the bows recovered from the *Mary Rose*. This makes clear that there is still debate about the draw weights with some authorities thinking that the minimum may be as low as 65lb. However, the draw weights of replicas noted in the book and others made by members of the English Warbow Society suggest that draw weights were over 120lbs.

3 The first occurrences seem to be in the 1440s in the Paston letters and an order for military equipment necessary for the defence of Caen issued in 1449 which can be found in Stevenson, J. (ed.), *Letters and Papers Illustrative of the Wars of the English in France in the Reign of King Henry VI* (London, 1861–4) Vol.1, p.501

4 Hildred, A. (2011) p.682

5 Biddle, M. *et al.*, *Henry VIII's Coastal Artillery Fort at Camber Castle, Rye, East Sussex* (Oxford, 2001) pp.196–8

6 Dyer, C., *Making a Living in the Middle Ages* (Penguin Books, 2003) pp.95 and 233

7 *Ibid.*, p.155
8 *Ibid.*, pp.97–8
9 *Ibid.*, p.187. This figure includes towns in Wales and Scotland although the large majority were in England
10 *Ibid.*, p.191
11 See Hutton, R., *The Rise and Fall of Merry England* (Oxford, 1996) for more about these festivals
12 Figures derived from Ayton, A. and Preston, P., *The Battle of Crecy 1346* (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2005) pp.190–1
13 More detailed accounts of these legal efforts to encourage archery in England can be found in Wadge, R., *Arrowstorm: The World of the Archer in the Hundred Years War* (The History Press, 2007) pp.53–6, 210–13, 226–8
14 Carpenter, D., *The Struggle for Mastery; Britain 1066–1284* (Penguin Books, 2004) p.80
15 Armstrong, K., *A Short History of Myth* (Canongate, 2005) p.17

II

Law of Archery before the Black Death

In the time between the Norman Conquest of England and the Black Death the Norman and Plantagenet kings of England made a number of laws which by turn encouraged and restricted the practice of archery by the people. These fell into two broad categories. Firstly there was Forest Law which governed the very extensive royal forests created by the Norman kings, with the prime purpose of preserving deer and other animals for the kings to hunt. Inevitably, the body of Forest Law included severe restrictions on anything to do with archery within the bounds of a royal forest, so that even having an unstrung bow in a man's house was an offence unless he had express permission from the Forest Justices. Inevitably this permission did not come for free. Secondly, there were those parts of the general law of England which had the broad purpose of maintaining the King's peace. Men were required to have weapons in their houses to meet their duty of actively assisting in this. At the most basic town and village level this meant that they had to take part in the Hue and Cry, a legally required version of 'have a go' that involved the pursuit and arrest of offenders. Very soon after the Norman Conquest the kings were sufficiently confident of their hold on the country that they required freemen to own arms so that law-abiding men were well enough armed to assist the sheriffs in keeping the peace if necessary. Through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Assizes and Statutes were issued which placed a duty on men to own arms and practise in their use so that there were an adequate number of competent armed men to summon for service in times of war. As time passed and circumstances changed serfs came to be included in the groups required to have arms in their homes.

Forest Law

Anglo-Saxon law allowed men to hunt on their own land. The only

clear statement of this is found in the 'Laws of Cnut' issued about 1020–3, which asserted that 'it is my will that every man is entitled to his hunting in wood and field on his own land'. This is very significant since the 'Laws of Cnut' consists mainly of extracts from earlier English lawcodes, and so the popular right to hunt may have a long history in Anglo-Saxon England. These laws also outlined wide ranging royal hunting rights with the king declaring; 'everyone is to avoid trespassing on my hunting, wherever I wish to have it preserved, on pain of full fine.'[1] An example of a pre Conquest non royal hunting preserve is found in a charter dating to second half of the tenth century concerning an estate at Grimly in Worcestershire which makes mention of a hunting wood (*silvis venationibus*).[2] The Norman kings made enormous changes to the hunting rights of the population of England. They declared much larger areas to be royal forests, these forests being primarily hunting preserves for the king as well as being a source of income from timber, pasturage and rents. It has been estimated that in the thirteenth century about a quarter of the land area of England was forest, and that this may have been reduced from a higher level in the previous century.[3] The Norman kings rapidly developed a special body of law, Forest Law, which governed the lands included within the bounds of the royal forests. These can be most simply defined as the land which was governed by Forest Law, and were regarded as separate from the king's demesne, which was the land the king held as his own and had not let to someone else.

Forest Law bore down most heavily on those landholders and serfs who were resident in the manors and villages that fell within the bounds of a royal forest. Until the thirteenth century, for those who lived within and around the bounds of the royal forests the demands and dictats of Forest Law could override their legal rights as defined in what came to be known as English Common Law. But it was a very confused situation since there is also clear evidence that criminal and civil pleas relating to offences and other legal matters occurring in areas within the bounds of the forests were heard in Common Law courts.[4]

The Foresters and other officers of the royal forests were often notorious for their heavy-handed implementation of Forest Law. One example of this oppressive and often corrupt implementation occurred when a forester took over the inquest into the lawing of dogs (the removal of three claws or more likely pads from a forefoot of all dogs that lived within the bounds of a forest to stop them chasing game). This was usually carried out by the Regarders, who were leading members of local society rather than royal employees. This forester then extorted money from the dogs' owners by claiming that the law

required the removal of the toes from a particular forefoot, and the one that had been maimed was always the wrong one.[5] In the first 150 years after the Norman Conquest Norman of England, Forest Law included ferocious physical penalties for contravening many of its rules. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle in its summary of William I's reign comments that: 'He set apart a vast deer preserve and imposed laws concerning it. Whoever slew a hart or hind was to be blinded.'[6] The Chronicle is undoubtedly making an implied criticism of William and the way he radically changed the hunting rights of the people at large in comparison with the rights they had before the Conquest. The penalties in Henry I's reign for offences against the 'venison and the vert', that is against both the beasts and the trees and pastures of the forest, not only included blinding, but also emasculation and death. William of Newburgh commented that 'he [Henry I] made too little distinction between a person who killed a deer and one who killed a man.'[7] Henry I's laws as recorded at the end of his reign contain reference to an early version of Forest Law, but not in the clear detail that is recorded in later reigns. Clause 17 headed 'Concerning the plea of the forests' has two sections:

1. The plea of the forest is embarrassed with many inconveniences.

2. It is concerned with the clearing of land; cutting wood; burning; the carrying of bows and spears in the forest; the wretched practice of hambling dogs [what was later called lawing dogs]; anyone who does not come to aid in a deer hunt; anyone who lets loose the livestock which he has kept confined; buildings in the forest; failure to obey summons; encountering anyone in the forest with dogs; the finding of hide or flesh.[8]

The author of this account of Henry's laws perhaps implies that Forest Law is outside the main body of the law of the kingdom by the way in which he gives this vague summary of it. His phrase 'the wretched practice of hambling dogs' suggests that he was unhappy about aspects of Forest Law, reflecting what became a clear antipathy felt by many in England in later reigns.

In the Assize of the Forest in 1184, Henry II codified and restated Forest Law as it had developed up to that date. The first article establishes the penalties for infringing the Forest Law at the same level as his grandfather Henry I had enforced. There seems to have been no perceived need to specifically restate them.

The second article states 'He forbids that anyone shall have bows or arrows or hounds or harriers in his forest unless he shall have as his

guarantor the king or some other person who can legally act as his guarantor.' The ninth article dealt with a particular menace to the deer in the royal forests; 'the king forbids that any cleric shall transgress either in regard to his venison or to his foresters.' This article was another part of Henry's struggle with the Church throughout his reign to limit its independence from royal law and influence. The tenth article dealt with surreptitious hunting, saying 'The king has commanded that none shall hereafter in any wise hunt wild animals by night with a view to their capture either within the forest or without, wheresoever the animals frequent or have their lairs under pain of imprisonment for one year and payment of a fine or ransom at pleasure.'[9] It is noteworthy that this last article extends the king's protection over those animals considered huntworthy outside the bounds of the forest if they wander at night. Human activity in the daytime might be expected to encourage the animals to keep in the shelter of the forest, but in the quiet of the night they might wander outside the bounds of the forest and become 'fair game'. This article also ensured a 'buffer zone' around the forest at night when it would have been easier to enter the forest unseen to poach. However, this article could also be used by the forest officers to interfere in the lives of those who lived around the forest.

Henry II left the system of forest administration which applied Forest Law and raised income for the king from the forests in such a robust and efficient condition, that it carried on running effectively through Richard's reign. This was despite Richard's neglect of the details of administering the English part of his inheritance.

King John enthusiastically maintained the efficiency of the forest administration, with an eye to gaining as much profit as possible from both the resources of the forests themselves and from the administration of Forest Law. There is no clear evidence that he extended the area afforested beyond that his father Henry II had held, indeed it is possible he reduced it slightly through his regular acceptance of gifts to secure various forest privileges.[10] But through his efficient administration of the royal forests he retained such effective control of the forests that he was able to use rigorous enforcement of Forest Law to inconvenience his opponents among the nobility and the Church. The Cistercian order being one group that particularly suffered in this way. After twelve years of this oppressive use of prerogative power in relation to the forests he held a particularly harsh, and potentially profitable, Forest Eyre in 1212. All this led to reform of Forest Law being an important part of the demands of the barons in their dispute with King John in the latter part of his reign. When King John and the barons signed Magna Carta in 1215 many hoped that by doing this they were re-establishing the

agreement between the king and his magnates that was so necessary for successful medieval government. In fact John saw it only as way to gain a breathing space to allow him the opportunity to regain dominance. As soon as most of the barons left London John repudiated the charter, and was supported in this by Pope Innocent III who annulled it because John had signed it under duress. But John died in 1216 before he could win or perhaps more likely lose the war against the barons. Magna Carta was re-enacted in the name of his successor, the nine-year-old Henry III, this time with the support of the papal legate.

Magna Carta dealt with the general issues where royal government had exploited the king's power to harm the interests of all free men in England and did not include detailed recommendations to resolve the tensions arising from Forest Law and the extent of the royal forests. It laid the foundations for major developments in the rights and roles of all men (and to a lesser degree women) in medieval England, whether free or serfs. But it included two articles relating to the forest in broad terms. Clause 48 stated that:

> All evil customs of forests and warrens, foresters and warreners, sheriffs and their servants, river banks and their wardens are to be investigated at once in every county by twelve sworn knights of the same county who are to be chosen by worthy men of the county, and within 40 days of the inquiry they are to be abolished by sthem beyond recall, provided that we, or our Justiciar, if we are not in England, first know of it.[11]

This was a radical change since it was the first time that anyone outside the royal administration was given the duty and power to investigate and change law and practice within the royal forests. It was a step towards including the royal forests within the ordinary legal and administrative systems of the country. Clause 44 addressed another grievance where the administration of Forest Law had been over zealous, declaring that 'Henceforth men who live outside the forest shall not come before our Justices of the Forest upon a general summons, unless they are impleaded or are sureties for any person or persons who are attached for forest offences.'[12] This clause restricted the jurisdiction of the Forest Justices and Forest Law to the forest itself and matters pertaining directly to it, rather than Forest Law overriding the Common Law in the districts around the forests as had previously been the case.

In November 1217 the Forest Charter was sealed in the name of the young Henry III. This charter codified the complaints and demands of the barons and other landholders which were not included in detail in the Magna Carta, and matters discovered by the inquisitions of the

juries of knights established in Magna Carta. Undoubtedly the most important clause in the Forest Charter for the people of England at large was Clause 10 which declared 'None henceforth shall give life or limb for our venison'. This clause goes on to say that those convicted of taking venison shall be fined, or, if they are unable to pay a fine, imprisoned for a year and a day. On release those imprisoned must find sureties for their subsequent behaviour or be banished from the kingdom.[13] This repudiation of the Norman kings' attitude that to kill a deer was as serious as killing a man, almost certainly led directly to an increase in poaching by the common man since the penalties for poaching were now survivable. Although the penalty of a year and a day in prison should not be underestimated, medieval prisons were foul, pest-ridden places that could kill the healthiest person. Moreover, since prisoners relied on friends and family for food, care and clothing, being in prison could be a serious financial penalty on the prisoner and his family.

As will become clear in the discussion of illegal hunting below, some men came to be recognised as habitual offenders against the king's venison. More court records survive from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries than do from the earlier centuries, which may mean that we know more about poaching in those centuries, rather than that more actually happened. But the removal of the threat of maiming or death must have made men more willing to take the risk of attempting to poach the king's deer.

There are two other significant themes in the Forest Charter. The first is that the extent of the royal forests should be limited to their extent at the beginning of Henry II's reign. But this was not straight forward since successive juries enquiring into the extent of royal forests came to differing conclusions in regard to the boundaries of particular forests over the next fifteen years. Secondly the Regarders were given more control over the numbers and powers of the foresters in a serious attempt to restrict the opportunities for the foresters to levy oppressive fines and fees on the people living in the forest.

By the thirteenth century, particularly after the enactment of the Forest Charter, the officers responsible for the administration of royal forests and the implementation of Forest Law fell into two groups: one included the Forest Justices and foresters appointed by the king, and the other representatives of the men of standing who lived in the counties containing the forests.

Ideally the Justices of the Forest Eyre were appointed at regular intervals, and travelled the country visiting each Forest Court to hear cases. In theory they were men of experience within the royal administration who were independent of the Forest administration. But, because the king directed when the Eyre should be held these

Justices were often unpopular for their willingness to impose high fines and so raise money from the administration of justice to fill the king's coffers. The men who administered each forest were appointed by the king directly or indirectly. Each forest usually had a Warden who was in charge of a group of Foresters of different rank. The most important were the Foresters in Fee, who held land for the service of being a forester in person or through a substitute. In addition to these was a more numerous body of paid foresters, the riding foresters who were the more senior and the walking foresters. These men did most of the work of looking after the forest. The activities of these Justices and officers were 'monitored' by two groups of men representing the people living within and around the forest.

The Regarders were formally established by the Assize of Woodstock in 1185. They were appointed by the sheriff, usually twelve of them for each county, to look into all the activities that went on in the forest, such as assarts (clearing of forest land for cultivation), purprestures (making buildings or enclosures within the forest), whether trees had been cut down, the presence of mines or forges in the forest and who had bows and arrows within the forest.[14] All these activities were the sort of matters which corrupt or grasping foresters could make money out of by effectively licensing them for a fee to the detriment of the forest. The other group were the Verderers who were elected by the County Court. They were established by Richard I's reign at the latest, and their main duty was to attend the forest courts every forty days to view the attachments (accusations put before the court) made by the foresters.[15] This enabled them to check that the foresters were not making too many accusations with little or no foundation. The Forest Charter built upon the roles of these two groups to establish more robust checks on the scope for abuse of their powers by the foresters.

As the account of illegal hunting below demonstrates, the royal administration had every reason to be very concerned about the carrying of bows and arrows within the bounds of the forests. This concern was so deeply felt that even forest officers could be restricted in their right to carry them, again not without good cause since foresters very easily became poachers. One clear example of this comes from the Peak Forest in the early 1290s. John of Wolfhunt and Thomas Foljambe held a bovate of land between them for the service of hunting wolves in the forest. This was not an all round the year job, they were expected to make two expeditions each year to catch wolves, normally in March and September. The way they were to do this was quite explicitly described. They were to go into the forest accompanied by only one servant each to carry traps, equipped with a hatchet, a spear and a hunting knife but expressly neither a bow nor

arrows. They were also allowed one unlawed mastiff each.[16] John's name is noteworthy since he is described as holding his portion of the land by hereditary descent whereas Thomas acquired his by purchase.

Laws Governing the Ownership of Arms

Like the basics of Forest Law, the roots of the legal duty of all free men in England to be prepared to provide military service to protect the kingdom can be traced back to Anglo-Saxon times as well. This service was owed in response to a summons from the king through his officials. Before the Norman Conquest this meant service in the Fyrd. There has been a great deal of discussion among academics about the degree of continuity of the Fyrd tradition into Post-Conquest England. The current consensus is that the Norman and Plantagenet kings recognised the value of the tradition and used it to achieve two ends. Firstly, it was a way of repairing a fracture in the English social structure brought about by the Conquest itself. By offering the opportunity of military service to Englishmen, it both included them in the aims of the new regime, and gave them an opportunity to expend their aggressive energies. Secondly, it was a very simple way of providing the Norman kings and the great magnates, particularly the Marcher barons, with a considerable part of the armies necessary for their persistent military activities.

The Norman and Plantagenet kings developed this duty of bearing arms in a series of Assizes of Arms and the Statutes associated with these Assizes. In these, the male population of England aged between 15 and 60 was divided into groups defined initially by both legal and financial status. Members of each group were expected to serve in person, armed to the appropriate standard for the group. Through these Assizes and Statutes the Norman and Plantagenet kings demonstrated that they were sufficiently confident in the stability of the broad population of England that they could require their subjects to have arms in their houses and be competent in their use.

The first Assize of Arms that we are aware of was proclaimed Henry II in 1180–1. He issued two versions, the earlier one proclaimed in Le Mans covering the Angevin and Norman parts of his empire, and the other issued in 1181 covered his English kingdom. It seems surprising with hindsight from an English point of view that while the Assize issued in Le Mans specified that those men in the lowest income group should have 'a gambeson, iron cap, spear, sword or bow and arrows', the English one only specified a gambeson, iron cap and spear for the same group.[17] A possible explanation for this omission in the English Assize of Arms can be found in an order Henry issued in 1175 when he was holding court at Woodstock. Henry decreed that 'none shall

carry arms in England east of the Severn, namely bows and arrows and knives with points.'[18] The penalty for so doing was arrest and imprisonment. What motivated this order is uncertain. It has been suggested, because of the mention of the Severn and the skill of the South Welsh with bows, that this was a measure to restrict wandering Welsh miscreants. It could just as easily reflect Henry's uncertainty about the reliability of his English subjects, and their willingness to keep the king's peace after the disorders of the previous reign. Also, given Henry's enthusiasm for hunting and the extent of the royal forests in England, it could be an attempt to restrict popular archery as part of a concern about poaching. Certainly Henry seems to have been less interested in military archery than either his predecessor, Stephen, or some of his successors.

The Assize of Arms of 1230 included the novel provision of recognizing the availability of competent archers and the need to encourage the development of military archers. Archers, willing to use their skills in defence of their homes, had been available in considerable numbers in some parts of the kingdom of England for many years as Richard of Hexham's account of the Battle of the Standard in 1138 makes clear. This account can be found in chapter VIII. The 1230 Assize stated that 'he who has goods to the value of 20/- shall have a bow and arrows, unless he lives in our forest, if he lives in our forest and has goods to the value of 20/- he shall have an axe or a spear.'[19] These requirements were expanded in the Assizes of 1242 and 1253 and finally in 1285 when the Statute of Winchester, which was for the most part a revision and expansion of these earlier Assizes of Arms, consolidated these developments.[20] The Statute laid down what type of soldier each man should serve as, and the weapons that he should have in his house. Later generations looked back to it as the measure of legitimacy with regard to the demands for compulsory military service made by their kings.

Given the scale of his military activities, Edward I might have been expected to have brought about major changes to the recruiting system in England, but this was not the case. His main contribution was a pragmatic one, extending the paying of royal wages for arrayed troops so that they received them from the time they reached the place of muster.[21] His concern was to get predictable numbers of troops to where he needed them on time, and payment of wages from arrival at the muster point helped. The real developments in the system had been brought about by his father, Henry III, a much less successful military figure. Firstly, in 1230 he extended the duty of military service to include the unfree, and divided freemen and town burghers into two wealth categories, those holding 40/- of goods and those holding 20/-.[22] This was the first Assize that helped to erode the

differences in status between free and unfree men in England. Serfs made up about 70% of the rural population, and they ranged from those who held enough land to live well to those who struggled to survive.[23] In medieval England in the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, perhaps as much as 90 per cent of the population of England lived outside the towns and cities, so to include the serfs in the groups that were expected to contribute men to the king's army was very important. Most obviously it ensured that the king's officials had many more men to choose from when raising armies, but it also developed in these men a sense of having a responsibility towards the wellbeing of the kingdom. In doing this Henry widened the pool of potential fighting men considerably, which was a major contribution to the effective development of the English army over the next two centuries. Secondly, his Assize of Arms of 1242 brought about changes in the types of arms held by the various financial groups, and, most importantly for the purposes of this book, recognised the importance of the bow and allocated it to those holding land worth more than 40/-. This group, whether free men or serfs, would be men who had sufficient land to feed them and their family with some ease and so represent the higher levels of village society. By specifying these men as potential archers in the king's army, Henry III's administration is making it clear that they believed that these were the sort of men who might have bows anyway.

Edward earned a formidable military reputation, and inevitably he wanted include as many of his subjects as possible in the pool of men he call upon in his military campaigns. So, in 1285 he issued the Statute of Winchester. The main regulations of the Statute were:

> Every man between fifteen years and sixty years shall be assessed and sworn to armour according to the quantity of their lands and goods; that is to wit from £15 land or 40 marks goods a hauberk, sword, knife and a horse: £10 lands or 20 marks goods a hauberk, sword and a knife: and from 40/- land and more unto 100/- of lands sword, bow and arrow and a knife: and he that hath less than 40/- yearly shall be sworn to keep gisarmes, knives and other less weapons: and he that hath less than 20 marks in goods shall have swords, knives and other less weapons: and all others that may shall have bows and arrows out of the Forest and in the forest bows and boults.

Boults or bolts at this time were blunt arrows for shooting birds and small game like rabbits, so this regulation would limit the ownership of sharp arrows which could be used to hunt deer to those who had need of them for legitimate sport or for their work. The Statute formalised a review system to ensure that men did indeed have the

right arms available by decreeing 'that a view of armour [a view of arms in the records discussed below] be made two times every year'.[24] The Statute of Winchester was the final stage in the transformation of the purpose of the Assizes of Arms. In 1181 the purpose was as much concerned with local law and order, by ensuring that law-abiding free men were well armed, as it was with providing a pool of potential soldiers. By 1285 this had changed and the Assize had become a key part of the English military system, aiming to ensure that a large number of men both free and unfree who owned a level of military equipment were available to the Commissioners of Array, from whom they could select the necessary forces.

The significant point in the Statute of Winchester was the last requirement 'and all others that may shall have bows and arrows'. Edward was both declaring that all men who were physically able had a duty to take part in the defence of the kingdom and that the bow and arrow was a weapon that was available to everyone. This is a significant move from the assumptions implied in Henry III's Assize where archery skills were expected from a much more limited group. In nearly all other parts of Europe the weapons that the poorer levels of the population were expected to have were pole or staff weapons. These might be agricultural tools or long spears with the simplest of points like those used so effectively against the English by the North Welsh and the Scots, or maybe staves with simple spikes or weighted heads, like the godendag used by the Flemish infantry to such good effect at the Battle of Courtrai in 1302. But Edward specified bows and arrows.

Historians have long emphasised the Anglo Norman kings' experiences in Wales as a major influence on their recognition of the importance of encouraging the development of archery skills for military purposes, but this is too simple. Edward experienced the Welsh archers fighting both for and against him, and he also employed English archers in his campaigns. In 1277 for example he had a company of 100 archers from Macclesfield Forest in his army.[25] So it seems that Edward was recognising a broadly based tradition of English popular archery in this requirement of the Statute of Winchester, just as his father had done to a lesser degree earlier in the century. Evidence for this tradition can be found in the following chapters.

From Edward I's reign until late in that of his grandson Edward III the Statute of Winchester was considered adequate to ensure that there were enough men competent with various types of arms to defend the kingdom and make up the armies that pressed Edward III's claims in France with such spectacular success. Indeed by 1327 in London, the enthusiasm for owning and carrying weapons of all kinds,

not just bows and arrows had become so marked that proclamations against the carrying of arms within the City had to be issued.[26] The only evidence for any other royal proclamation or law specifically encouraging archery comes from a not always reliable source. One variant of Jean Froissart's Chronicle includes a statement that in 1337 Edward III ordered that 'none should engage in any sports than the hand bow (*l'arch a main*) and arrows and that all workers making bows and arrows should be made free and quit of all their debts.'[27] Froissart produced an invaluable account of the first stages of what became known as the Hundred Years War but he could be unreliable about details and dates on occasion. Unfortunately there is no support in any other record for Froissart's account. However, the first part of this alleged proclamation matches the one that was certainly issued in 1363, and the second, the cancelling of bowyers and fletchers debts, is typical of the gestures medieval kings made, acting to benefit a group necessary for their plans at the expense of others. So there may be truth in both parts of Froissart's account but when these orders were enacted remains the question.

Notes

1 Whitelock, D. (ed.), *English Historical Documents 500–1042* (Eyre Methuen, 1979) pp.454 and 467
2 Wiltshire, M. *et al.*, *Duffield Frith* (Asbourne, 2005) p.40
3 Young, C.R., *The royal forests of Medieval England* (Philadelphia, 1979) p.5
4 *Ibid.*, pp.30–1
5 *Ibid.*, p.82
6 Garmonsway, G.N. (trans.), *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Everyman, 1954) p.221
7 Quoted in Young, C.R. (1979) p.11
8 Downer, L.J. (ed. and trans.), *Leges Henrice Primi* (Clarendon Press, 1972) pp.120–1
9 Douglas, D.C. and Greenaway, G.W. (eds), *English Historical Documents 1042–1189* (Eyre Methuen, 1981) pp.451–3
10 Young, C.R. (1979) p.26
11 Holt, J.C., *Magna Carta* (Cambridge, 1992) p.465
12 *Ibid.*, p.463
13 *Ibid.*, p.514; actually from the 1225 issue of the charter.
14 Young, C.R. (1979) pp.49 and 89
15 *Ibid.*, pp.42 and 85
16 Burton I.E., *The royal forest of the Peak* (Bakewell, 1966) p.16
17 Stubbs, W. (ed.), *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi Benedicti Abbatis* (Longman Green and Co., 1867) Vol.1, pp.269–70 and 278
18 *Ibid.*, p.93
19 *Calendar of Close Rolls* (1230) p.398
20 Powicke, M., *Military Obligation in Medieval England* (Clarendon Press, 1962) p.119
21 *Ibid.*, p.124
22 *Ibid.*, pp.85–6
23 Dyer, C. (2003) pp.97–8

24 *Statutes of the Realm*, Vol.1 (London, 1735) pp.97–8.
25 Hardy, R., *The Longbow* (Patrick Stephens, 1992) p.42
26 *Calendar of Pleas and Memoranda Rolls 1323–46* (Cambridge University Press, 1926) p.18
27 Luce, S. (ed), *Chronique de Jean Froissart*, Book 1 (Paris, 1869) p.402

III

Bows and Arrows as Part of Medieval Life

The place of bows and arrows in the everyday life of medieval England is at the heart of any account of popular archery. The starting point for this account of popular archery is the general ownership of bows and arrows in medieval England, without any great emphasis on the reasons why men had them. The various uses men put them to are outlined in the following chapters. The clearest evidence of people owning bows and arrows comes from archaeological finds which are also in a later chapter in an effort to simplify the narrative.

As the previous chapter showed, a legal duty for the men of medieval England to bear arms was developed, so that, by the end of the thirteenth century, the majority of the ordinary men were conditionally expected to own a bow and be able to use it. The wording of the Statute of Winchester is interesting. It said that 'all others that may' should have bows and arrows. Meaning that the king thought that it would be best if as many men as possible belonging to the poorer groups in both town and countryside had a bow but it was not made an explicit legal requirement. Men at all levels of society in medieval England owned bows and arrows. Some may have kept bows to meet their obligations under the Statute, but others who were required to have a different level of arms, also had an interest in archery. Even the kings and magnates of England often had an active interest in archery.

Some men owned bows and arrows and became skilled in their use because the terms of their tenancy or their job required it well before the Assizes of Arms and the Statute of Winchester developed the obligations of owning arms to include archery. The earliest references to these men are found in the Domesday Book. Reginald the Archer held two good sized estates in Oxfordshire, two and a half hides at Ipsden valued at 50/-, and a similar area at Chadlington, valued at 40/-.[1] A hide was a measure of land the Norman kings inherited from the Anglo-Saxon royal administration, and was not so much a broadly understood area of land in the way a virgate or oxgang was, but had become an administrative measure to enable the assessment of tax due from estates and counties. In the eleventh century a small manor might contain three hides so Reginald had two substantial

landholdings. This is intriguing because there is no record of Reginald owing any particular service for his lands. We can only guess at why he gained his surname. He may have been primarily an archer in the royal forests in Oxfordshire, or he may have been a military archer of some standing in the tradition of those who were so valuable at the Battle of Hastings.

The simplest evidence for bows and arrows just being 'part of the furniture' in medieval households comes from the records of the Curia Regis, the King's Court in the first quarter of the thirteenth century. In Suffolk in 1201, Robert Grilling accused Walter of breaking into his house and stealing a sword, a bow a sheaf of arrows (*glenam sagittarum*) and other chattels.[2] This is a very early use of the term 'sheaf of arrows' which became standard unit of quantity when ordering military arrows in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. As will become clear from cases noted elsewhere, it is not certain that a sheaf of arrows meant two dozen arrows in the thirteenth century as it did in the later centuries, since there is some evidence from Edward I's reign that it may have meant just twelve arrows.[3] However, possession of a sword, bow and a sheaf of arrows suggest that Robert took archery seriously and was probably a professional archer in war or work. In 1203 William son of Godfrey accused William Flecher of stealing two shillings, two garments, a bow and twelve arrows.[4] (The accused's surname probably meant that he was a butcher not a fletcher; sometimes both these occupational names are spelt the same way in medieval English records.) While in 1224 Roger of Boneville accused Richard Foliot and Vivian son of Radulf of imprisoning him at Woodstock in Oxfordshire. He claimed that they made him pay a ransom for his release and stole a bow, sixteen arrows and a knife from him.[5] They were found guilty, although the court records give no detail of motive, unless it was just for gain. As in the earlier case, the number of arrows both William and Roger owned suggests that they were probably men whose work required archery skills although no record survives to confirm this. The lack of mention of either owning swords may make it less likely that they were soldiers. These cases are interesting because all three victims owned unusually large numbers of arrows compared with what seems to have been common in the thirteenth century.

Robert of Werdale was an intriguing example of a man who was a professional archer making his living in peace as well as war from his skills with the bow and arrow. In 1298, Robert was registered as a Freeman of the City of York; his craft being recorded as archer.[6] While Robert no doubt did military service as an archer in Edward I's armies, or defending the North against the incursions of the Scots, this would not have been enough to get him admitted to the Register of Freemen.

Freemen at this time were mature men who were established in their craft or trade, and so would normally be comfortably off. They provided many civic leaders for their community. So how did Robert establish himself within the community of York? The simple answer is that we don't know. The most likely possibility is that he was a sort of 'master at arms' training the city militia in archery in response to the Statute of Winchester, and quite possibly teaching individual citizens who wanted to develop their archery skills for sport.

The Gift of Bows and Arrows as a Rent or Service

Some of the most persistent evidence for the ownership of bows and arrows after the Conquest is found in the records of rents and services owed for landholdings. These continued largely unchanged from the eleventh to the fourteenth century. It is fair to assume that the examples that we know of under represent the actual number of landholdings held through archery-related service or rents because of the inconsistent survival of records from these centuries. These records provide evidence both of the practise of archery by the elite of medieval England and the involvement of ordinary men both as archers and in archery related crafts.

In the eleventh to fourteenth centuries the kings of England, their households, noble and knightly households practised archery mainly as part of their enthusiasm for hunting. Some or all of them may have practised archery as a training sport in their childhood and youth to prepare them for the hunt. Some slight evidence of practice archery by a noble household in these centuries has been found in excavations at Faccombe Netherton. More detail of this can be found in chapter IX.

A natural consequence of the royal and noble enthusiasm for archery was that there must have been a number of skilled bow and arrow makers working to produce the high-grade equipment they required. These craftsmen may also have produced some of the bows and arrows given as payments in many of the cases noted below where land was held for rent in kind. While any hunting bow or arrow could be used in war, that does not seem to have been the symbolic purpose of rents in kind, in contrast to landholdings requiring archery service. Many of the bows or arrows given as rent seem to have been hunting or sporting equipment. When service of an archer was required in return for a landholding sometimes it was specifically personal service, in others cases, just the requirement to provide an archer. The majority of examples of providing archery service were in a military context, although there are a few where the purpose of the service is not clear, or was specifically civilian. However, by the end of the thirteenth century the practice of personal service was being

replaced by the provision of substitutes, hired men, in many types of service. This began to happen even when the landholder held land as a Forester, although it was less common in this case.

Not all examples of rent service being paid in bows or arrows required both bows and arrows as the rent. Arrows were more often required on their own than bows, particularly if a tenant had to offer personal service to the king when he came to hunt in one royal forest or another. The forests of Dartmoor and Exmoor figure in a number of such records. William Aungevin and his heirs (several of whom were also called William) are recorded as holding land in Devon between the late 1270s and 1307–8. They had to bring the king three barbed arrows in person whenever he hunted in Dartmoor or Exmoor.[7] In 1281 another landholding at Oare and Hole in Devon within the bounds of Exmoor Forest was held by a member of the family, Walter, in serjantry, with the provision that 'whenever the king should hunt in the forest of Exmoor the said Walter should find him two barbed arrows'.[8] John de Davaylles, another of the king's tenants in Devon, held the hamlet of Boghebrok (Bow Bridge?) in 1310 for the service of giving the king a bow and three barbed arrows whenever he came to hunt on Exmoor. The cash value of this rent was recorded as 5/-, which is unusually high for a bow and three arrows, so maybe it included an amount for John's personal service in presenting the arrows.[9] Maurice of la Barre held a tenancy at Barnstable in the late thirteenth century from which he took his name. For this he give the king three barbed arrows and a salmon (no doubt from the river Taw) whenever he came to hunt on Exmoor.[10] Records from the 1280s and 1320s show that the Albermarle (Alba Marlea) family held Lewenston Manor in Devon for the service of giving the king two or three arrows stuck in an oatcake whenever he went hunting in Dartmoor Forest. The number of arrows owed was increased in the later record, and the arrows were described as barbed by the 1320s.[11] The later record also puts a value of 6*d* on these barbed arrows. This is a high price In comparison with prices of arrows in royal orders of the 1280s, 1330 and '40s. These orders priced military arrows at about three arrows for 2*d*, the higher cost of the barbed arrows probably reflected the higher quality of arrows presented for the king's use as well as the cost of the barbed heads themselves.[12]

Archery equipment as a rent in kind occurred as part or all of the rents or services owed regardless of the size of the landholding or the status of the tenant. One example suggests that one manor, Thaxted in Essex, was the home to at least one smith or iron worker at the end of the thirteenth century since the rents owed to the lord included eight ploughshares worth 4/-, a knife worth 12*d* and seven barbed arrows worth 3½*d*.[13] Amongst the higher levels of society records in both

1232 and 1233 shows that the Ferrars Earls of Derby sent a bow (*arcum*) a quiver (*pharetra*) and twelve arrows to the Exchequer as the service due for holding Drakelow manor in Derbyshire.[14] This is noteworthy as an early record of the use of a quiver in English archery. The tile from the Chapter House of Westminster Abbey shows a small quiver in use in the 1250s (see plate 4). Many of the rental payments made in arrows were for smaller quantities than the Earls of Derby paid in this case. It is likely that this archery equipment was of good quality, given the status of both the giver and the recipient, and may well have been used by members of the royal household in sport or hunting. The arrows were most likely to have plain triangular or diamond-shaped heads rather than barbed heads since at this point in the thirteenth century barbed heads were specified when they were required.

Many of the examples of rents where barbed arrows were required were for landholdings in areas where the recipient and his household might go hunting. Clear examples of this are found in the records of the inquisition held at Roger de Somery's death in 1273 and manorial records of the same time. The de Somery family's interest in hunting was clear from an agreement between an earlier Roger de Somery and Earl of Winchester regarding hunting rights in Bradgate Park in the Forest of Charnwood in 1247 (see details in chapter VII). In 1273 the family had extensive land holdings including the manor of Barewe (Barrow on Soar) in Leicestershire which was also in the area of Charnwood Forest. Three virgates in this manor, a substantial holding since one virgate was enough to feed a peasant family and give them a small surplus to sell in average years, was sublet to Preciosa de Staunton for a rent of a quiver and thirteen barbed arrows worth 18*d*.[15] Two other tenants also paid rents which supported the de Somery household's enthusiasm for hunting. Robert Martel's heir held two virgates and an assart (a legally approved area of land cleared from forest or unused land) for a yearly payment of 12*d* and twenty barbed arrows worth 10*d*, while Ralph Tiers held a smithy for annual rent of a sheaf of twelve arrows worth 6*d*.[16] Four years later the records of rents paid to the Serjeant of Beaumanor in the Charnwood Forest area included three tenants who owed arrows, one a quiver and twelve barbed arrows, another twenty arrows and the third just one arrow. These same rents are recorded as owed in 1335, but the payment of twenty arrows had been altered to owing twenty arrowheads.[17] This is one of a small number of examples where the recorded payment in the fourteenth century changes from whole arrows to arrowheads. If this has any significance, it may reflect the increasing number of men following archery crafts such as fletching and bowmaking which can be evidenced in the surviving records of

the fourteenth century, something which in turn would have lead to a general increase in quality of archery equipment. When arrows were presented in a quiver it was required that a dozen (or a baker's dozen) be included. This may be evidence that in civilian practice at least in the thirteenth century, a sheaf of arrows was only twelve, a suggestion supported by Ralph Tiers' rent. By the fourteenth century, when military arrows were ordered in large quantities, the sheaf equalled twenty-four.

The more one looks at the records of bows or arrows being given as rent, the more it becomes clear that value of the bow, arrow or sometimes parts of arrows (there are examples of just arrow shafts or arrow heads being owed as rent) is often slight in relation to the value of the landholding in terms of what it can provide for the tenant. This is particularly puzzling when the landlord is known to have an urgent need of money, as was often the case with the kings of England. Some of the more extreme examples of this follow. In the 1260s Robert de Ferrers, Earl of Derby granted Henry de Ireton a heath in the forest of Duffield in Derbyshire for the annual rent of a barbed arrow.[18] Another even more extreme example can be found in records from Edward I's reign in 1282, where Oliver de Ingham was noted as holding Redham manor in Norfolk for the yearly payment of one barbed arrow.[19] Since the record was created at the inquisition held when Oliver died, this minimal rent had been established for some time.

Another very clear example was recorded in the early stages of Edward II's reign when a subtenant held the manors of Creuker and Furlynton from a clerk for three barbed arrows yearly.[20] In this case neither party to the agreement seems to have been a noble, although by holding whole manors, a tenant should have gained enough income to be what we would now call gentry. Indeed manors like these may well have been worth enough that it meant that the tenant should have taken up knightly status and duties. However, there seems to have been a lessening in the enthusiasm for knightly status and all that it required by Edward II's reign. The thirteenth century had seen a marked decline in the number of knights in England, with perhaps only a third of the number being available at the end of the century compared with those that had been available in the early 1200s. This decline may be because a period when rising prices affected the level of disposable income such men might have, it may reflect widespread attempts to avoid the demands of knightly status under a warlike king such as Edward I.[21] This was despite the terms of the Statute of Winchester of 1285, whereby men such as these who held a single manor would have been expected to appear as a mailed horseman supporting their landlord when a king summoned his army or supply a

substitute. Although military service was at the heart of the thinking behind feudal land tenure, subtenants with standing in the local community were also valuable to a larger landholder because of the support they could provide in all sorts of legal activities, whether as witnesses on documents or as sworn guarantors in legal cases. A last example of a purely symbolic rent dates to 1344, that part of Edward III's reign when he was desperate for money to pursue his ambitions in France. Thomas Ward held 100 acres of pasture in Westmoreland from the king for one barbed arrow yearly, which, as will become clear below was equivalent to between ½*d* and 1*d* in cash terms.[22] Even allowing for recognition of the danger of Scottish raiders affecting Thomas' livelihood from the pasture, this seems an exceptionally low rent.

The records of bows given as part of the rent for a landholding include frustratingly brief descriptions of the bow required, adding almost nothing to the limited information we have about bows of the period. The wood that the bow should be made from was usually specified, but no indication of the dimensions of the bow was given. Walter de Godarvile held substantial lands of the king including some held by knight's service, meaning that he had to serve in the king's army in person as a mailed horseman. The 1250 inquisition into his land holdings also listed one virgate which was held for the delivery of an auburn bow (*unius arcus de auburn*) to the king.[23] *Auburn* or *Aubourne* is usually translated as laburnum, which can make good-looking bows with a good performance as some modern bow makers are rediscovering (see plate 6).

John de Mohun Lord of Dunster in Somerset had extensive lands including some at Little Tyverton in Devon that he sublet to William de Crues for 6*d* or an auburn bow (*arcus de Hauborne*) yearly by 1279.[24] Given Tiverton's proximity to Exmoor, this rental may well reflect that the de Mohun family was invited to hunt in the royal forest on occasion, although they had their own hunting parks elsewhere no doubt. 6*d* seems to accurately reflect the cost of buying an auburn bow at the end of the thirteenth century since there is a record of 1285 wherein six aubourn bows were bought at 6*d* each to equip Welsh archers in the employ of the king.[25]

The inquisitions held into the landholdings of Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester and Hertfordshire at the end of the thirteenth century may indicate a similar interest in hunting with the bow. Henry Tyeys held Sherbourn in Oxfordshire for one auburn bow and three barbed arrows yearly. In turn de Clare owed the same rent to Edmund Earl of Cornwall for a manor which he had sublet at Grendon in Buckinghamshire.[26] A generation later the passage of both these estates to new landholders is recorded. In 1327 the yearly rent of the

landholding at Sherbourne is again recorded as an auburn bow (*arcus eburneum*) and three barbed arrows valued at 12*d*, except that this time the bow was specified to be without a cord, while in 1333 the widow of John de Peyvner is recorded as owing a bow 'which is called an aubornebowe' and a barbed arrow or 12*d* as annual rent for Grendon manor.[27]

Less elevated landholders might also pay rent of a bow and arrows. In 1315/16 John of Mautravers held land in Spekynton, Dorset in socage (free tenancy) from Robert son of Payn for a yearly rent of a bow worth 6*d*.[28] It is noticeable that neither man was noble, and that while the bow was valued the same as an auburn bow, no bow wood was specified. Two years later a share of the manor of Coombe Neville in Surrey in socage was recorded for an annual rent of an auburn bow and five unfletched arrows.[29] It is possible that the arrows were delivered unfletched because men of standing liked to have their arrows fletched in some individual style that identified them. Evidence of arrows being identifiable by their fletchings can be found in chapter VII. Alan of Bokeshull (Bexhill), who may have held knightly status, also owed two sorts of archery-related rent or service for parts of his scattered landholdings. As is recorded below in 'Military Archery before the Hundred Years War' he had to provide a bowman for forty days' service in the king's army in Wales for his manor at Brianston in Dorset. His home estate of Bokeshull was part of lands he held in Sussex that were mentioned in an inquisition of 1324/5. For Bokeshull he made a yearly payment of a bow and twelve arrows fletched with peacock feathers to William of Echyngham (Etchingham, Sussex).[30] Peacock feathers became increasingly commonly used when fletching arrows for the 'gentry'. In the following year Edward II's over mighty favourite, Hugh le Despenser was recorded as owing a bow and two arrows to be delivered each year in person to Hugh when he was hunting in the chase at Chetelhamholt (Chittlehamholt, Devon) as the service rent for the manor of South Moulton in Devon.[31] Most of the rents in kind linked to hunting require that only arrows are presented, this is a rare case where a complete hunting archery kit is presented. The number of arrows is not purely symbolic. The records of a number of the services where arrows were presented in similar circumstances note only two or three arrows and several of the contemporary illustrations of archers discussed below show that for hunting purposes men often only carried two or three arrows. In another example of a 'hunting set' owed as a yearly rent, only a single arrow was required.

The unchanging nature of many of these rents in kind is demonstrated in an inquest of 1324/5 wherein it is recorded that the Earl of Warwick owed a rather symbolic service of a bow without a

cord to be presented yearly at the King's Exchequer whenever the king was at war with the Prince of Wales for parts of the manor of Aston Kanteloue in Warwickshire.[32] By this date the line of the independent Princes of Wales had been superseded by the English royal family for about forty years. An even more long-lived example is recorded in Leicestershire. In 1277 Robert de Farnham rendered an arrow each year to the lord's Court at Beaumanor as his rent. This continued until the sixteenth century when the rent had become the gift of a barbed arrowhead.[33]

But it wasn't only the king who required archers' service as a due for landholding. Gilbert de Clare, Duke of Gloucester granted William son of Martin the vill of South Moulton for the service of William providing a man with a bow and three arrows whenever Gilbert wanted to hunt in the Gower.[34] A vill was a small rural community, and, since there is no mention of William providing personal service, this is clear example of how an ordinary man could gain civilian employment through his archery skills.

Foresters and Bows in Royal Forests

royal forests could be found in most counties of England and provided a extensive area where bows and arrows were an important part of the equipment used by those employed to protect and exploit them. A tombstone dating to about 1300 and now found in Durham Cathedral makes this clear since a bow and arrow is shown as part of the equipment of the forester whose tomb it comes from (see plate 5). A much earlier court case is also shows this. A clerk was heavily fined (40 marks) in 1167 for attempting to steal a bow from some royal foresters.[35] There is no hint of the clerk's motives; it could have been that the bow was particularly fine or it could have been revenge if the foresters had previously thwarted the clerk. Whatever the reason, the clerk's status only preserved his body from legal sanction, not his purse.

While many of the services and rents owed provided equipment for the kings and magnates to use while hunting, in some cases they also provided the foresters necessary to maintain the hunting preserves. By 1283 Gilbert le Fraunceys held land in four northern counties including the manor of Merphul (Marple) in Macclesfield Forest in Cheshire for the service of providing one forester on foot with a bow and a horn to help keep the forest. The personal services owed by the Foresters in Fee of Macclesfield forest are noted below. Hugh de Wevre was forester of the small forest of Mondrem in Cheshire in the first decade of the fourteenth century for the same service as Gilbert.[36] A number of the foresters in the Forest of Dean were provided as the

service for landholding, but personal service seemed to be less commonly expected than was the case in some other forests. Henry of Dene had to provide a footman with a bow and arrows to help keep the Forest of Dean as his service for St Briavels in 1292.[37] Ten years later two manors in Gloucestershire were held for similar services; Bikenor for an annual payment of 15/- and the service of a man with a bow and arrow to keep a wood in the forest while Abbenhale was held for a payment of 20/- per year and the service of two men with bows and arrows.[38]

Records concerning the Foresters of the Peak Forest show that some were foresters, as a personal service owed for their landholding, while others were hirelings. In the early 1290s Thomas le Archer, a significant name no doubt, was one of the Foresters.[39] In 1303 a messuage at Wormhalle (Wormhill) in Derbyshire was held for the service of finding a man with a bow and arrow to keep Campana, the western ward of the forest. Wormhill continued to be held for this service, either personal or by a substitute since Nicholas Foljambe is recorded as passing it on to his heir Robert in 1319/20. Nicholas had held 30 acres in Peak Forest in 1319–20 for service as a forester '*per corpus suum cum arcu et sagittas* (in person – literally through his own body – with bow and arrows).' Two years later another local man, Richard Danyel of Tideswell, held it on similar terms. That same year the Foljambes recovered it by renting it from Danyel for a payment of 6/3*d* and six barbed arrows a year. Thomas Foljambe passing it on to his heir, also called Thomas, both being recorded as owing personal service as foresters.[40] The Foljambes are first recorded as holding this Foresters post in the 1290s, but the duty of finding an archer is not specifically mentioned, although, given the job, there is no reason to believe it was an additional duty created at the start of the fourteenth century. As a family the Foljambes were heavily involved in the administration of the Peak Forest. In the early 1290s Thomas son of Thomas Foljambe was recorded as being one of two men who twice a year had to lead wolf hunts in the forest as the service for a share in a bovate of land.[41] By 1336 this landholding and forester duty had passed to Mereval family.[42] In 1323–4 a relative, Thomas Foljambe, held 15 acres within the same forest for the service of providing a man on foot equipped with bow and arrows to assist in keeping the forest, probably what other records call a 'walking forester'.[43]

Richard le Archer was another of the Foresters in the Peak Forest recoded in an inquest of 1320–1. He held land and a mine at Great Hebelow in Derbyshire 'of the king in chief by service of keeping the forest of the Peak in person with a bow and arrows'. As his name makes clear Richard, who may have been a relative of Thomas le Archer, was another professional archer who took service directly

with the king to use his skills. He added to his income by working a lead mine as well as the land to maintain himself and his family. In this he was following a fairly common practice in the Pennines where mining was usually a seasonal activity rather than a full-time occupation at this time. His son, also named Richard and who died in 1337, owed the same services, so the family carried on with the mixed workload of being a forester and a miner while also doing subsistence farming.[44]

Men who had the right to have bows and arrows in their house within the bounds of a royal forest had to prove this right to the Forest Justices. An early example of this is found in the records of the Northamptonshire Eyre of 1209, in a case which clearly shows how Forest Law could bear down on a man living within the bounds of a royal forest regardless of whether he had shown any malicious intent towards the king's game or not. Ralph Neimut of Threwlton was before the Justices because a crossbow and a bow were found in his house without him having a royal warrant.[45] There is no mention of the Foresters considering him a threat to the forest beasts, just that they have discovered the bows in his house. They may well have found the bows by exercising what they saw as their rights as royal foresters, to search the house of any person living within the forest. If so this was just the sort of action that made the Foresters unpopular.

There are a number of records of the fines paid for similar offences in the Pipe Rolls compiled in Henry III's reign between 1230 and 1250. The most detailed dates to 1231, and noted that Gilbert of Chesthastede was fined 8 marks (£5/6/8*d*), for being taken in a royal forest in Berkshire while carrying a bow and seven arrows. Most of the other offences were noted as just someone having an unlicensed bow and arrows within the forest. The fines for the offences range from half a mark (6/8*d*) to 100 shillings. The fines tended to be towards the higher figure demonstrating how keen Henry III's administration was to maximize its income from justice. The lowest fine was levied on John the Forester of the Abbot of Westminster, and may reflect the importance of good reputation and powerful support when facing medieval courts. It is difficult to believe that it reflected John's inability to pay a substantial fine since he was in good employment. But the King's interest in making money from the administration of Forest Law seems to have come near to breaking one of the pledges in Magna Carta, that no amercement (fine set at an arbitrary amount) should threaten the livelihood of both free and unfree.[46] One man, William of Rualdi was recorded as paying of the fine of 100/- in instalments.[47]

The power of Forest Law is evident in one case from the Huntingdon Eyre of 1255. Richard of Grafham was a canon in

Huntingdon, when he 'contemptuously withdrew' from the religious house where he lived and 'came through the country as a wanderer. A forester arrested him in the house of William of Grafham (the court record makes no mention of William being a relative) for having 'a bow and five small arrows (*parvis sagittis*)'. Richard was acquitted because other foresters and verderers testified that Richard 'was not an evidoer in the forest', in other words had never been suspected of poaching.[48] Richard fell foul of Forest Law simply by owning a bow and arrows within the area of a forest; the size and likely power of the bow and arrows was no defence.

The 1287 Eyre of Lancaster Forest gave licence to particular specified men to keep bows and arrows in their houses within the bounds of the forest and to carry them outside the boundaries of the king's demesne (ie royal manors and other particular landholdings within the general boundaries of the royal forest but not part of it).[49] In another example Ralph of Hoodenk's family had been granted the right to have bows and arrows in their halls within the bounds of the royal forest of Essex to defend themselves. Richard I gave them this right, but they had to prove it to the Forest Justices in 1292, to demonstrate that their ownership of bows within the Forest of Essex was licenced.[50] This whole episode begs the question of what were the circumstances in twelfth-century Essex that made it necessary for Ralph and his family to have bows and arrows for defence! The Fleta, a treatise on English Common Law compiled around 1290, emphasised the need for enquiry to be made under Forest Law into the names of those men living within the forest who carried bows and arrows to confirm that they had been given permission by an appropriate authority. This seemed to embed part of Forest Law into English Common Law. Forest dwellers themselves had no legal argument to enable them to avoid the cumbersome, repetitious process of reaffirming their right to own bows and arrows within the wide bounds of royal forests, even when they had received permission from the king himself.

Slightly oblique evidence of men owning licenced bows within a royal forest comes from the Perambulations of the small royal forest of Pancet in Hampshire. Perambulations were the legal investigation of the boundaries of a royal forest carried out by the Foresters but with juries of local men agreeing the bounds. The boundaries of Pancet Forest were particularly complicated because there were several private woods included within its boundaries. The Perambulation of 1225 described one of the boundary marks as being 'by the barn of the wood of Richard le Archer…' The same Perambulation also declared that Henry II had wrongly taken five private woods into the forest, one of which belonged to David le Archer.[51] These reports show two

men, possibly relatives, lived in the forest area and probably worked as archers in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. It is possible that they were employed by the royal household when hunts were organised in Pancet Forest. Later perambulations do not mention land owned by men with the 'surname' Archer as boundary markers.

The Foresters of Macclesfield Forest were clearly a group of men skilled in archery because of the terms by which they held both their lands and their jobs. The Inquest of Service held in 1288 records that Richard of Vernon, Robert of Downes, Thomas of Orreby, John of Sutton, Roger of Stanlye, Thomas of Worth, Robert Chaumpeyn and Jordan of Disley 'hold (their various areas of the forest) by free forestry and shall come at the king's summons and follow his banner with the same weapons with which he guards his bailiwick, viz bow and arrows.'[52] At about the same date, the charter describing the holdings and duties of the Forester in Fee of Abenhall in the Forest of Dean makes no mention of him using a bow and arrow in his role as Forester, but insists that 'if the king goes to war, he [the Forester in Fee] will come on a horse with a hauberk [and] with bow and arrow…'[53]

This was probably the norm for Foresters at this time, men holding the post for personal service. As the fourteenth century progressed, the practical work of being a forester was carried out more and more by wage earning men, while the post of Forester in Fee, that is holding both land and the job of forester as a feudal service, became firmly established as a hereditary post, the holders becoming local gentry. This is not to suggest that these hereditary Foresters took no interest in managing the forest, just that they did less of the potentially dangerous enforcement of Forest Law. It is not unrealistic to suggest that the foresters of whatever rank owned bows and arrows of good quality since their jobs required the use of archery skills. This understanding of the military value of men who developed and practised their archery skills in their peace time work is demonstrated in royal records until the second half of the fourteenth century. By that time the consequences of the military successes of Edward III's reign, which included clearer legal encouragement of all men practising archery was leading to an increasing professionalization of the archers in military service.[54]

Bows and Arrows as Household Property

In 1242 Geoffrey the Draper, his brother William and some unnamed acquaintances were accused of breaking into Robert de Columbariis' house in the hundred of Whistone and assaulting three men in the house while stealing some clothing, armour and weapons. John de

Wathdon claimed that he was beaten and had a bow and twenty-three arrows valued at 12*d* stolen. John de Piddle claimed that Geoffrey wounded him in the foot with a lance and stole a surcoat, a bow and twenty-three arrows worth 4/-.[55] While the military equipment stolen in addition to the bows and arrows might imply that the bows and arrows were of military quality, the value put on the bows and arrows was much lower than that paid by the Crown forty years later for military bows and arrows. Indeed it was lower than most of the money equivalents recorded for rents and services that required the giving of bows or arrows. Even allowing for price rises over a period of forty years this suggests that the bows and arrows were slighter and of much lower quality than the equipment expected if John de Wathdon had military experience as an archer.

Several court records provide further evidence that 'civilian' archery equipment was made to a different scale and power than military equipment. Both sides involved in a dispute at Henslow, Bedfordshire had access to bows and arrows. The men of the household of John le Burk seem to have attacked that of the Prior of Lanthony in 1272. After shooting a man 'with a small arrow' John le Burk's men fled the scene taking a purse, a bow and 'a small sheaf of arrows' belonging to the Prior's household.[56] This dispute shows that moderate households in the thirteenth century might commonly include men with archery skills, possibly developed through hunting rather than war, since the record suggests that the arrows were of no great size and weight. While the meaning of '*parvis sagittis*' in this case and that of Richard of Grafham is very uncertain it must have meant that the arrow was of slight weight, and had a small head, perhaps in comparison with the arrows the foresters usually came across in their work. Possible evidence of arrows that could meet this description can be found in the discussion of archaeological finds in Chapter IX Men seemed very ready to take bows and arrows when there was an opportunity. In 1275 John de Eland ordered several men including his son Hugh to seize some cattle from Earl Warenne's fee in Yorkshire. The men did this and also took a bow valued at 2*d* and ten arrows valued at 4*d* as well.[57] This could have been a very sensible action to prevent Earl Warenne's men shooting at them as they took the cattle away, or it may just have been an easy way for one of de Eland's men to get a bow. But, as a possible insight into the prevalence of bow ownership, it suggests that only a minority of men owned even ordinary quality bows and arrows at the time.

Medieval court records tend to be precise in noting the details of offences, which suggests that men didn't always carry bows and arrows together. John son of Alice of Hyperum beat Richard of Bately's servant and took nine arrows and a pair of gloves from him in

1274. The gloves were valued at 4*d*, but no value was put on the arrows.[58] This may have been an oversight, but may imply that either the arrows had no real value, or that no one in Richard's household had any idea of the value of the arrows. Twelve years later in another case of theft, William son of Ive de Werloley stole two bows from strangers who were guests in a neighbour's house.[59] In 1276, John the son of William of Westfields in Hertfordshire was arrested on suspicion of theft. As was legal practice at the time John's chattels were seized, and they included a bow and two arrows. His chattels in total were valued at 6/7½*d*, but the bow and arrows seem to have had no value attached, suggesting that they were nothing special. John's father was a Hayward, an office that usually went to a man in the middle tiers of peasant society. So John was a young man from a peasant family able to support itself successfully who owned a bow and a couple of arrows of no great quality, which he probably used for sport, and maybe a little illicit hunting.

Sometimes men carried bows and arrows in unlikely circumstances. In Staffordshire in 1280, two brothers, John Aleyn of Walehale and Thomas, has been at a feast in a private house. They set off home, John on horseback and Thomas on foot carrying a bow and with five arrows in his belt. John suggested to Thomas that he climb on the horse behind him so that they could get home quicker. So he took the bow in one hand and the arrows in the other to make easier for Thomas to climb onto the horse. But the horse was badly girthed so they both fell to the ground, John falling on one of the arrows which fatally wounded him in the armpit.[60] Why Thomas had brought his bow and arrows to a feast is a puzzle, presumably he had been shooting somewhere and joined the feast on his way home. The record confirms that carrying arrows in the belt was common practice, as can be seen in many of the book illustrations of the time discussed below.

In 1286 William le Vintner complained that Geoffrey de Braybof unjustly imprisoned him in Reigate Castle and stole a cask of vine, 40 gallons of vinegar a sword and a bow from him.[61] In this case it seems likely that William had the bow and the sword for self-defence while travelling as part of his trade. But if that was the case, why did he seem to have no arrows?

In the last few years of the thirteenth century a bow and some arrows was valued at 2/- in an assault case heard before the Wakefield Manorial Court.[62] The value put on this bow and arrows is quite high compared with many mentioned elsewhere in this book which may suggest that the bow matched the quality of bows bought for military use noted in chapter VIII. This might suggest that an unfree tenant of Wakefield manor was serious about complying with the Statute of Winchester and could have had military experience.

The records of a court case from 1316 may list the equipment necessary for a man whose work required archery skills, such as a forester or parker, or more likely perhaps for service as a military archer. William Carpenter of Gaukthorpe near Osset demanded in court that the executors of Richard of Gaukthorpe deliver his legacy to him. The legacy comprised a supertunic, a trinket, a bow, twenty-four arrows, a horn, a knife and a dagger (*misericordia*).[63] While misericords occur in other records they are not common, and this term usually applied to specialised knives with long, very thin, stiff blades used to finish off an enemy in war. It could be used for the same purpose on a large wounded game beast, but it would have been of very limited use in everyday life. A full sheaf of arrows was also uncommon at this date. A year later Richard and Alice, children of Robert of Stanesfield were charged with stealing clothing including a stole, a tunic, a pair of boots, shoes a pair of linen cloths, a sword and a bow and some arrows.[64] All these items were stolen for profit since a receiver is also mentioned in the court record. When compared with other court records, the bow and arrows in this haul look like items held for personal protection or sport. Ownership of sword was quite widespread and did not indicate either nobility or military experience, although it might suggest that the owner was more prosperous than the average person.

Around the same date two men who were part of a 'band of malefactors' under the command of a knight, William de Bradeshawe set upon William le Hunte on the King's highway. They robbed him of 4/- and a sword, bow and arrows worth the same.[65] As regards the value of his property, since the bow, arrows and sword are valued together with no description, it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions about their quality. However, their value again suggests decent quality equipment for an ordinary man, possibly required by the owner in his work, if William le Hunte's surname is any indication.

In 1325 near London, a group of the Dean of St Paul's servants were guarding the Dean's crops in the fields at Stepney. One of them, William Page, the Dean's cook, accidently shot Robert Page, the palfreyman in the side and fatally wounded him.[66] There is no mention of the two men being related. This may reflect the influence of the Statute of Winchester over forty years, but as will be noted in the chapter on sporting archery London had a long history of men shooting for sport. So it is no surprise by this date that a bow and arrows could be found in larger households, and that men with general practical skills might also have some skill with a bow.

A happier story of how John Turk came to own a bow and three arrows was recorded in 1346.[67] John lived in Somerset, and, when he

was over 40 he was called to witness that Walter, the son and heir of John of Romsey was 21 years old, so that he could inherit having reached his majority. John Turk swore to this saying that he knew that Walter was 21 'because he was present at the baptism at the request of John of Romsey who gave him a bow and three arrows in memory of his son's birth.' The relationship between the two Johns is not described, but it fair to suggest that while they may just have been friends, John Turk probably had enough standing in the community that John of Romsey wanted him to feel a small duty to support Walter if necessary. Success in court actions in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries depended as much as anything on the social standing of the plaintiffs and their supporters as on legal right. So John of Romsey could easily have been making a gesture with this gift to add to his new son's potential network of support within the community.

The most unusual bow recorded in the early fourteenth century can be found in the will of John Fitz Marmaduke, Lord of Horden and Governor of Perth who died in 1311. John was a northern English lord who had considerable experience in the Scottish wars. Among the items listed in his will are sixteen arrows valued at 2*d* and a bow of whalebone (*un arcus de baleyn*) valued at 6*d*. There were also some military equipment including lance heads and some pieces of armour.[68] It seems unlikely that this just meant a curved piece of whalebone, since whalebone was not so rare at this time that someone of John's standing might keep an unworked piece as a curiosity. It is much more likely to be exactly what it says, a bow made of whalebone; a curiosity that might well appeal to a vigorous military man who hunted. This is not the only example of a member of the nobility having an unusual bow. In 1234 the Earl of Pembroke gave Henry III a horn crossbow (*balistam de cornu ad duos pedes*) of 2ft; that is a powerful crossbow that needed the use of both feet when spanning it.[69] This classification for crossbows, together with the lighter one of 'a crossbow of one foot', continued to be used well into the fourteenth century. Clearly this would have been an unusual and intriguing gift for the king, and one that, since it was powerful, could have been very useful for hunting. But a royal order made twenty years later to the Sheriffs of London suggests that horn crossbows were not just a rarity used by royalty and nobles. The Sheriffs were ordered to take delivery of twenty horn crossbows from the Constable of the Tower of London and then take them to the king's forces gathering at Portsmouth.[70] This order suggests that the royal armouries had acquired or made a small number of horn crossbows for military use, not so much as a curiosity but more likely as an experiment as part of an effort to make more reliable and effective

crossbows. This may have been a legacy of experience of the effectiveness of Saracen laminated horn bows during the Crusades. But in England, horn never became a significant material for bow manufacture. The quest for better performing bows being met by the use of steel for crossbow prods in the fourteenth century and the import trade in good quality yew bowstaves for hand bows which can also be shown to have developed by the fourteenth century.

The Costs

It is difficult to find evidence of the cost of bows and arrows in medieval England before the mid-fourteenth century when the records of the large scale orders issued by the royal administration to equip Edward III's armies for the early campaigns of the Hundred Years War give some idea of the purchase price paid to craftsmen. There is evidence from a number of court cases of a value being put on bows and arrows but these may well be slightly lower than a true purchase cost. Much of the evidence that there is comes from the period of Edward I's Welsh wars, and not all was concerned with specifically military equipment. In 1285, William Fitzwarren paid 35/- for twenty-four bows, 17½*d* each, and 19/9*d* for twenty-four dozen arrows, just under 10*d* per dozen. These bows may have been primarily military in purpose since twenty were given to 'Welsh archers of the king', and the remainder were kept for the king's service. A month later in the same year, William bought another five bows and five dozen arrows for the King's Welsh archers, paying 16*d* per bow and about 8½*d* per dozen arrows. A third small purchase of bows for the King's Welsh archers made in the same year can be related much more closely to the bows mentioned as rental payments, since it consisted of six auburn bows which were bought for 6*d* each.[71] Four years later the Constable of Bristol castle paid 11/6*d* for eight bows, 17¼*d* each, for the Queen's Foresters in Feckenham Forest.[72] These bows must have been bought primarily for non military use, being the necessary equipment for the royal foresters to carry out their duties. Some accounts of these duties and the importance of foresters being skilled archers can be found in chapters VI and VII. In the 1340s the records of the large scale orders of military bows and arrows supplied by the sheriffs sometimes included the cost or cash equivalent that the Sheriffs could send to the King in lieu of the equipment ordered. These prices range from 12*d* per bow and 12–14*d* per sheaf of twenty-four arrows for equipment supplied by the Sheriff of Yorkshire in 1341 to 18*d* for bows and 16*d* per sheaf of arrows for those supplied by the Sheriff of Somerset and Dorset four years later.[73]

However there are a few records which give a cash equivalent of the

bows and arrows owed as rent which may reflect the prices of civilian bows and arrows at the time. Inquisitions relating to the manor of Barrow on Soar in the area of Charnwood forest in 1273 noted above tended to value arrows at ½*d* each. One which valued a quiver and thirteen arrows at 18*d* therefore implies that the quiver was worth 10*d* which might suggest that it was a very good quality item. Quivers were rarely mentioned at this time, and this valuation supports the notion that they were exceptional pieces of equipment, used only by archers of the higher social classes. The accounts of the Serjeant of Beaumanor in the same area give a little direct evidence of the value of archery equipment. In the accounts of 1277 and 1335 there are records of income from selling archery equipment, probably some of that received as rental payments. In both sets of accounts 2/- was received for the sale of a quiver and a dozen arrows and 3*d* for ten fletches and a bird bolt. In the 1335 accounts, the income included 7*d* for twenty-one arrows.[74] This last payment seems a good deal for the purchaser compared with other information about arrow prices at the time. It is difficult to make any comment about the other sales except to say that they also suggest that quivers were relatively expensive, possibly only used by the social elite at this time.

An inquisition of 1297 recorded that part of the rents Richard son of John received from his lands in Surrey was twelve barbed arrows worth 5*d*.[75] Three other inquisitions at the end of Edward I's reign in 1304–7 also record barbed arrows owed as rent. The rent owed for the manor and park at Woodhull in Wiltshire was four arrows worth 4*d*; that for Niweton manor in Dorset included twelve arrows worth 6*d* annually, while that for some land in Surrey was only one arrow worth ½*d* annually.[76] As with other examples these rents remained constant, since when Woodhull appeared in another inquisition twenty-three years later, the rent was still four barbed arrows to be paid to the Exchequer yearly.[77] Yet in 1318–19 the rent for five acres on meadow in Hertfordshire was recorded as one arrow yearly worth 3*d*.[78] An inquisition held five years later found that a large messuage in Bletchingley was held for annual payment of one barbed arrow or ½*d*.[79] In 1327 the rent for a manor in Sussex was half a knight's service and nine barbed arrows worth 9*d* to be presented each Christmas.[80] As has been noted above in this same year, the yearly dues for the manor of Sherbourn in Oxfordshire were an auburn bow without a string and three barbed arrows.[81] Comparing this valuation with others of the same period would put the value of the arrows at 3*d*, so that an auburn bow was valued at 9*d* at this date. In the following year a messuage in Dorset was held for a rent of twelve barbed arrows or 12*d* presented yearly at Michaelmas.[82] An inquisition of 1346 concerned with lands held in Buckinghamshire

shows the value of barbed arrows in relation to other commodities. For these John of Haustede owed a yearly rent of 1lb of pepper or 12*d*, two barbed arrows or 2*d* and two roses.[83] Perhaps the Countess of Lincoln was expected to provide better quality arrows, since the inquisition of 1348 on her holdings records that she held a small group of manors in the county for finding three knives and six barbed arrows worth 12*d* whenever the king came to Lincoln Castle. Cash equivalents for bows owed as rents occur less frequently, just as the presentation of a bow as a rent payment is much less common than the provision of arrows. There are two examples from the early fourteenth century. The first from 1315–16 provides a clear value for a bow as it records a free tenancy of lands in Dorset held for a yearly payment of a bow worth 6*d*.[84] Eighteen years later the widow of John of Peyvner owed a rent of a bow, which is called an 'aubournebowe', and a barbed arrow or 12*d* yearly for the manor of Grendon in Buckinghamshire.[85]

For comparison with the value from other items owed as rent at the very beginning of the fourteenth century, the rents owed at Combe in Wiltshire included the cash equivalent of hens as being 1*d* or ½*d* each and that of cockerels 1½*d*.[86] It is not surprising perhaps that poultry were valued more highly than arrows at this time, since they were certainly more useful on a day-to-day basis. More importantly this comparison puts the affordability of bows and arrows in context. While many peasants might hope to raise some surplus crops for sale in an average year, there were many more basic calls on this cash than buying a bow and arrow. This helps to explain the low value of 2*d* put on some bows in court records; they were not craftsmen bows but quite possibly homemade.

Two periods of problematic price inflation have been discerned between the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries. The first was showing its effects in the last decades of the twelfth century and the first of the thirteenth, the second in the early decades of the fourteenth century.[87] Rents tended to fall behind prices in these periods of inflation, but, from admittedly very limited evidence, the prices of bows and arrows seem to have been quite stable. The price of the bows bought for the Feckenham foresters in the 1280s are very similar to those paid for military bows in the 1340s, although taking the effects of inflation into account the price had fallen in real terms. This comparison is valid since in both cases it is reasonable to assume that the bows were of substantial draw weight, although we have no evidence of the type of wood used, or whether it was native or imported. The price of 'auborne' bows again seems stable comparing what was paid in 1285 and the rent value in the early fourteenth century.

Looking at the comparative prices of arrows reveals a more complex picture. Military arrows cost at most ¾*d* each in 1285 while by the 1340s they cost somewhere between ½*d* and ¾*d* each. This is a significant reduction since it is after the period of price inflation, and may reflect economies of scale given the quantities being ordered in the 1340s. It must also reflect a considerable increase in the number and capacity of fletchers and arrowsmiths. The majority of the arrows and arrowheads, owed as part of rent payments were specified as being barbed arrows, although there are a small number of early records which just say arrows. Barbed arrows were developed as hunting arrows, although what are generally regarded as fourteenth and early fifteenth-century military arrowheads also had small barbs swept very close to the body of the arrowhead.

By the beginning of the fourteenth century at the latest hunting barbed heads had developed into large heads with wide swept barbs now often called swallow tails. These developed from four types of arrowhead, one of which can be traced back to the late twelfth the others to the thirteenth century. They fall into two groups in Jessop's typology, MP7 and MP8 which are triangular heads with barbs extending out the body of the arrowhead, and H3 and H4 which were often large with long substantial swept back barbs (see plate 16).[88] The development of these types of arrowhead their significance and the circumstances of datable finds are discussed below. These barbed arrows were usually valued at between ½*d* and 1*d*, with the higher price becoming more common in the fourteenth century. This demonstrates a divergence in the costs of military arrows and broad arrows over the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, with the barbed arrow becoming relatively more expensive, possibly reflecting inflation. This trend continued into the fifteenth century when the inventory of equipment in Rouen Castle made in 1435 on the death of John Duke of Bedford, shows sheaves of barbed arrows (presumably big barbed hunting arrows as they represent a tiny proportion of the arrows listed the rest being military arrows) valued at about two and a half times the value of the ordinary arrows.[89]

There is a broad scatter of evidence for men owning bows and arrows in the two centuries before Edward III's great victories and the Black Death. Some of it, particularly the giving of bows and arrows due as rental payments, tells us more about the practise of archery by the middling and upper layers of society, than it does about popular archery among the mass of the peasantry. It is surprising that after 1285 when the Statute of Winchester suggested clearly that all poorer men regardless of status might have a bow and arrows to meet the king's summons for service, how thin this scatter of evidence is. This may arise largely from the invisibility of the mass of ordinary people

to history throughout the period, rather than the lack of any tradition of popular archery. One of the strongest pieces of evidence for its existence is the sequence of Assizes of Arms culminating in the Statute of Winchester which required men to be available for the defence of the realm with bows and arrows. This legislation would have been pointless if there was no tradition of popular archery to call upon.

The first signs of the significance of the royal forests and of hunting in general to the development of popular archery can be found in this chapter. Payment of rents with bows and arrows says more about archery in the middling and upper classes. It is likely that the majority of these were established on lands either near or within the extensive bounds of the royal forests, or the hunting preserves of the magnates whether lay or clerical. As regards these rents in kind, it may be that the implications of personal service to the king when he hunted, and respect for the royal forests was more important than the gain to the king from receiving these bows and arrows. This would go some way towards explain the very symbolic value of some of the rents in kind in relation to the value of the landholding they were given for.

A good number of the accounts in this chapter suggest that the bows and arrows used by the ordinary people were of no great power or quality, given the monetary values put upon them. This probably means that the ordinary men were likely to have made their own bows, or maybe had them made by a general craftsman. In which case it would be likely that the bow was made from trees commonly found in the English countryside such as ash or elm rather than the better bow woods like laburnum or yew.This is likely to arise from the relatively limited surplus cash income many peasants had, after they had bought more basic necessities.

Finally, what can a glance at the spread of occupational family names tell us about popular archery? Documents concerned with the administration of the New Forest between 1244 and 1334 record thirteen men with the family name of le Archer, more than Fishers or Bakers, but not as many as there were who were Millers or Smiths (or Fabri).[90] This leaves us with a faint insight into the local economy of the New Forest. It provided work opportunities for professional archers, a specialist group when compared with millers, smiths and bakers. Smiths are often found in forest or woodland areas because of the ready supplies of wood for charcoal. Millers are widespread because of the importance of grain and grain products in the medieval diet of all classes; more surprising perhaps is the relatively smaller number of full-time bakers. Le Archer is a much rarer name in medieval rural England in general. Bradbury makes the observation that ‘from the very frequency of the name, we can be sure that archers were not thin upon the ground’, this observation applies more to the

professional archer, the man with a greater than average level of archery skill whose occupation gave him and his family a surname.[91] In fact, it may be more accurate to say that the name is widespread, rather than especially frequent in many areas. There are fewer signs of the general practise of archery by the mass of the people evidence between the eleventh to thirteenth centuries in comparison with the clear evidence of it in the later fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

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IV

Archery for Sport and Practice

Was there a well-established tradition of archery among the people of medieval England at the end of the thirteenth century, or did men shoot to satisfy the requirements of the of the Statute of Winchester? The provisions of this Statute not only ordered that one large group of men, those holding lands worth between 40/- and 100/- must have a sword, bow, arrows and a knife, it also conditionally required that 'all others that may shall have bows and arrows outside the forest and in the forest bows and bolts.'[1] This suggests that among the poorer levels of medieval English society, the bordars, cottars, apprentices and wage labourers, some men could be expected to own and use bows. This provision of the Statute might have been targeted in part at the expanding towns and cities to include the growing number of men living there who would not have met the various property qualifications listed in the Statute. As has been remarked elsewhere, the underlying assumption in the Statute, and the earlier Assizes of Arms, was that men would practise to achieve some competence using the weapons they were expected to own. The Statute also laid down that there would be twice yearly 'views of arms' to ensure that everyone honoured their obligations. As a result, popular civilian archery became *the* sport in medieval England and Wales, in theory at least. The men who served as military archers had to learn and develop their skills in their home towns and villages before they were employable in war.

Today, bow hunting is considered a sport in the Western world, but in Europe in the Middle Ages it was regarded as a criminal activity when practised by the people at large. Ironically, it has retained this status in the United Kingdom, although not in much of Europe. As will become apparent in chapter VII, some illegal hunting with bows and arrows in medieval England was done as much for sport as for the pot. Despite this sporting element it is discussed in the later chapter as part of a general survey of hunting by the men of medieval England.

Practising archery in medieval England was inherently dangerous as will become clear from some of the events recounted in this chapter. Strong fences and hedges were not widespread in medieval England, despite there being clear legal responsibilities put on farmers to try to maintain beast-proof boundaries to protect crops and on herdsmen to keep their beasts out of the crops. People and animals could easily wander onto land where others were practising archery. The Laws of Henry I recognised this danger, while also implicitly accepting that the practise of archery was a good thing for the state of England. One clause declared that 'If anyone in the course of the game of archery or of some exercise of throwing [spears] kills someone, they will pay compensation'.[2] Clearly a death in these circumstances was to be viewed as accidental, rather than a deliberate felonious act. But despite the lack of explicit comments about the practise of archery in any of the records from the early twelfth century, there would be no need for this law if sporting archery was not a fairly common event. The earliest direct mention of archery as a sport comes fifty years later in Henry II's reign. No later than about 1182, William FitzStephan wrote a description of London in which he outlined the features of London and the habits of the Londoners in enthusiastic terms. He wrote that 'During the holy days in summer the young men exercise themselves in the sports of leaping, archery, wrestling, stone throwing, slinging javelins beyond a mark and also fighting with bucklers.'[3] The list of sports suggests that the young men were concerned with showing off their physical prowess as well as with developing their fighting skills. Despite this apparent popular enthusiasm for archery Henry II's English Assize of Arms made no mention of bows and arrows whereas his continental one did.

Much of our knowledge of ordinary people shooting bows for sport and practise comes from inquests after a mishap.

Shooting at birds seems to have been particularly hazardous for the bystanders. In the 1240s in Northamptonshire Richard, the son of Walter de Aspele decided to shoot at a kite circling overhead. He missed and the arrow fell on his brother William, who was also in the garden and killed him.[4] In 1258 in York, Roger de la Paneterie stood in front the hall porch and shot an arrow at a magpie sitting on a wall. But he didn't know that Geoffrey was coming alongside the wall and his arrow hit Geoffrey in the side, fatally wounding him.[5]

Something that happened in Derbyshire in 1249 shows the dangers of the question that often comes into the minds of modern longbow archers; how far will my bow shoot? Ughtred Smith of Botland asked Peter Grapere to come to the nearby wood and kill a wood pigeon for him. Peter agreed, and Ughtred went off to a hill near the wood. Peter wanted to see how far his bow would shoot, and so he shouted to

Ughtred to look out for his arrow as he was going to shoot towards the hill. 'So having shot from a longer distance than any bow was thought to carry,' Peter walked up to Ughtred and asked where his arrow was. Ughtred replied 'here in my head'. Peter, not surprisingly, was upset at this, but Ughtred told him not to worry because it didn't hurt! He then said 'let us go to that knoll and you pull out the arrow from my head, so that my wife does not see it, for she would perhaps grieve over much.' After Peter had pulled out the arrow they went home, where Peter went to get William the Leech. William thought that the wound would heal in a day or two, but he was wrong. Ughtred died soon after.[6] Peter must have been noted locally as a skilled archer otherwise Ughtred would not have asked for his help. The men must have been going to shoot in common woodland, since there was no suggestion that they were breaking any law.

Court records make clear that casual shooting at marks, what became more formalised as roving, was particularly hazardous for people in the neighbourhood. In 1249 two strangers were travelling through Eston 'shooting arrows in sport'. Alice the daughter of John was hit by an arrow 'by misadventure' and died eighteen days later. The two men fled and were not identified to the court.[7] The men were probably wise to flee since strangers tended to be found guilty by juries. Men and women in medieval England were always suspicious of people from outside their local area, so that in any legal enquiry any strangers found were very likely to be accused and found guilty.

The dangers of using bows and arrows in a village were demonstrated in one of the inquests of the Bedfordshire Coroners. In May 1271 John son Ralph Pluck of Tilbrook went to his father's gates carrying a bow and bolt. He shot at a mark (*mercam*) on a dunghill in the street. Maud, the five-year-old daughter of another inhabitant of Tilbrook was sitting in the shade under a '*louvre*' and the bolt struck her on the head beneath her left ear 'giving her a small wound (i.e. some blood flowed).' She recovered but died nine weeks later of another illness.[8] There are two general legal points in this account. Firstly because Maud received only a slight wound from which she appeared to have recovered there was no legal link between her death and the arrow wound. Secondly, we cannot assume that John was also a child just because his place in the community was still defined by him being described as Ralph's son, this just meant that he had not established himself independently of his father. This is one of several cases where the dangers of shooting at informal marks become clear. It also raises questions about what sort of archery equipment a child or youth might use. The coroners record gives no idea of the distance from Ralph's gates to either the dunghill or the shady spot where Maud was sitting. If she was out of sight some way behind the

dunghill then this case has some similarities with that of Peter and Ughtred above in that the archer had no real idea of how far his bow could shoot. The arrow used was described as a bolt maybe meaning that people who had bows in their houses expected to be shooting at birds and small game rather than larger animals. But it is just as likely that the use of blunt arrows for practise was an attempt to limit the danger of using a bow and arrow within a village, albeit unsuccessful in this case.

Another case from Bedfordshire records that in June 1272 Maud, the daughter of Reynold the smith of Goldrington was sitting at the door of her parents' house on Goldrington Green. Alfred, the son of Gode of Salph End came along, carrying a bow and arrows. He shot at a mark (*mercam*) with a 'small arrow' but, 'by misadventure' he shot Maud in her right eye, which was blinded. She died fifteen days later, in part because she was ill and pregnant. Alfred fled and so was outlawed, but he had no chattels for the court to confiscate.[9] This suggests that he was a poor man, possibly still living with his parents, but not too poor to have a bow. This is another reference to a small arrow, suggesting that Alfred's bow might have had a relatively short draw length, like those shown on the Bayeux Tapestry.

In 1279 Robert of Sterteford and others went into the free warren in the wood of Eppsho, owned by John Pevre. The record states that they had bows, arrows, hatchets and sticks with them and had gone into the warren 'to play'.[10] This sounds like archery practice since at this point there is no report of there being any wrongdoing in their behaviour beyond trespassing. However, the next day, as noted below, they definitely did have evil intent since they started to hunt the hares in the warren.

There are references to men practising archery on Sundays or holidays. One such happened in 1282 when Adam the son of John Basely of Camelton 'came in from the fields with a bow in his hands and a "*pylat*" which he shot at a mark [*Bundam*, which literally means a boundary marker] by a wall'. Alice, the eight-year-old daughter of William Frost of Camelton came by without his knowledge and was hit 'by misadventure' in the throat by the *pylat*. She fell down but picked her self up and went into a house, where she spoke but died later in the evening.[11] A pylat was clearly a local term for a bird bolt or blunt derived from the latin word '*pilectus*'. The blunt arrow must have struck Alice with some force since she fell down, but not that powerful a blow since she needed no help to get up and there is no mention of the arrow sticking in her throat, or blood being drawn. Since he was using a bird bolt it is possible that Adam had been out shooting at birds such as crows or wood pigeons, in the fields for sport (and to keep them off the crops), before the accident. Modern archers

often talk of men in medieval England practising archery in a more organised way on Sundays or holidays. While it is difficult to discover much evidence of this before Edward III's famous proclamation of 1363 insisting that men practise archery rather than play football, it certainly happened. In late thirteenth-century Cambridgeshire Henry, the son of William of Oure was shooting at marks (*ad metas*) with a group of others on Easter Day. Another William, who also lived in Oure 'stretched out his head towards the marks to see who shot the best' As a result one of Henry's arrows described as a 'pilectus' hit William on the head and he died three days later.[12] Henry was using a blunt arrow or bird to shoot at marks in an informal competition with his fellow villagers like the men shown in the famous illustration of men shooting at butts from the *Luttrell Psalter*.

Another holiday shooting accident happened on 26 December 1288. Richard the Tourner, his son, William, and others were shooting on the Roodeye (an open water meadow besides the Dee later used for horse racing) at Chester, when Philip the Suon ran across the meadow and was wounded in the thigh by an arrow.[13] The jury ordered Richard to pay 6*d* as amends, not much when compared to the amounts claimed in damages now.

Another less clear reference to shooting on a holiday comes from Westmoreland inquest of 1286. Robert of Appleby killed Nicholas de Hastings with an arrow on Whit Sunday. This happened 'at a game where many of the town (Crosseby) were gathered'. But this wasn't regarded as a sporting accident, but as a felony, although we might regard it as a 'crime passionale'. The inquest found that Robert did this 'on account of an old quarrel about a woman who Nicholas married but Robert had much loved.'[14]

The records of the Eyre of Kent held in 1313–14 include one case of a death which arose from what the archer involved certainly thought of as sport. William of Buckwell, Geoffrey his brother and a number of others were returning to their homes in a penitential procession from the chapel at Hoath. As they passed Richard of Brenssham's house, one of the procession, John of Rucking shot an arrow at Richard's dog. As a result Richard, accompanied by his brother and other local men pursued the procession, and battered William with mattocks so severely that he died three days later.[15] It seems odd that a man who was part of a penitential procession should be carrying a bow and arrow; maybe he was just walking along with the procession. It also seems pretty extreme to set about a man with mattocks given the nature of the affront. But as quickly becomes clear in any account of life in medieval England, the men and women of the period were very ready to resort to violence in response to perceived insults or to defend what was seen as their rights.

After these accounts of fatalities arising from sporting archery the question comes to mind; how dangerous was archery practice in medieval England? Barbara Hanawalt provides an answer for fourteenth-century England at least. She surveyed the medieval coroners' rolls of six counties, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire and Wiltshire.[16] She concentrated on these rolls because they provided fairly detailed accounts of the circumstances of the deaths under enquiry, and the majority fell within the fourteenth century. 2,873 deaths were recorded, but only five people were killed while using bows and arrows for sport. Archery was slightly safer for the participants than ball games, which led to six fatalities, and much safer than walking home drunk (eighteen fatalities). However, there was also at least one archery-related death among the fifteen people accidentally killed bystanding events. What is clear is that popular archery didn't seem to be especially dangerous, representing only 1.6 per cent of the sports-related deaths analysed by Hanawalt. This was despite the informal way archery was practised and the lack of fences or hedges to keep bystanders at bay. But the question that Hanawalt's survey could not answer was; how widespread was the practice of archery before it was explicitly legal required? The lack of mention of men shooting for sport and practice before Edward III's order of 1363 suggests not very, but that is clearly a misapprehension. The rest of this book will make clear that there was a lot of archery going on in England, it's just that we only tend to know about the illegal activity! Also it was a time when there was a major increase in the use of military archery by the armies of the kings of England, and that the necessary skills had to have developed somehow.

Londoners must have maintained their interest in archery after William FitzStephan's day, and taken the demands of the Statute of Winchester seriously since there are two lists of men arrayed for the king's service in 1337 and 1338.[17] In 1337 187 archers led by10 vintenars (commanders of 20 men) and 2 centenars (commanders of 100 men) were arrayed for service in Gascony. The vintenars, and at least one of the centenars who was also a vintenar, were probably archers as well. A goodly company of archers indeed! In 1338, 100 men were arrayed comprising 60 archers, 35 armed men and 5 vintenars. Allowing for the possibility of namesakes, as many as thirteen of the archers had served in the previous year, while three more served as armed men in 1338. This shows how practising archery could lead men towards soldiering as regular employment even before Edward III's great victories brought renown to the archers.

Contemporary Illustrations of Archery

Illustrations of archery can be found in many of the surviving manuscripts produced in England before around 1350. These are discussed in more detail in a later chapter; just the pictures of recreational archery are considered here. They are important because they show us how contemporary artists and their audiences saw archery.

The picture of men shooting at butts in the *Luttrell Psalter* is probably the best known record of medieval men practising archery (see plate 14). If the statutes and other written records are taken at face value, the practitioners of archery as a sport and as practice for war in medieval England were exclusively male, even when children are mentioned. But there is evidence from manuscript illustrations that some women in the noble and gentry classes hunted with bows and arrows as late as the fourteenth century at least.

The *Luttrell Psalter* is thought to date to between 1320 and 1340, and was certainly created in England, possibly at Lincoln. The artists who illustrated the *Psalter* are widely regarded as being highly skilled at observational art.

The picture of the peasant archers from Sir Geoffrey Luttrell's estates shows six men shooting at a butt. The bow held by a man about to shoot, and one of the spectators would be as long as their owners when unstrung. Another man who appears to be either advising on shooting or saying something like 'beat that then' while pointing at the butt, is holding a bow which may be shorter, perhaps about an ell and a half (a yard and a half) in length. This shorter length occurs in one or two legal records noted elsewhere in this book. This man also appears to have a small circular bracer on his left arm. The psalter also includes a little picture of an archer about to shoot a bird using a relatively short bow and a bird bolt. Perhaps a bit like Peter and Ughtred shooting a bird for the pot.

The Queen Mary Psalter is English and was probably created in London in about 1310–20. While some of the archery pictures show hunting archers there is one intriguing picture of sporting archery. It shows two archers with shorter bows shooting at a cock and another bird in a tree, this may be a competition with the birds tethered like modern popinjay shooting since the picture in near another showing the popular sport of wrestling.

The Taymouth Hours, which was probably created in England somewhere around 1325–35, again maybe in London.[18] It is unusual, but not unique in showing a woman hunting with a bow and arrow. She is using a short bow to shoot blunt arrows at hares.

The Smithfield Decretals is probably of the latest of this group of

manuscripts, dating to about 1340. It differs from the other manuscripts in that the archers in it all use man length bows, true longbows. One illustration shows a man with a fairly massive bow shooting at a cockerel on top of a windmill. Sport or irritation with a noisy cockerel?

The answer to the question posed at the start of this chapter is that not only was a tradition of popular archery established by the end of the thirteenth century, it can be proved to have existed from Henry I's reign in the early twelfth century at least. It is possible that the mention of popular archery in Henry I's laws is a reference to a resurgence of the sport as popular life recovered from the shock of the Norman Conquest. It is very difficult to find much explicit evidence of men shooting for sport or practise to develop militarily useful skills in the twelfth, thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.

The strongest strand of evidence for the existence of a tradition of popular archery can be found in the references to groups of men practising archery in the way contemporary archers do when they shoot in their archery societies and clubs. This starts in the 1130s with 'the game of archery' mentioned in Henry I's laws, includes the sports of London mentioned by William FitzStephan in the late twelfth century, the men of Chester and Cambridgeshire shooting on holidays a century later and leads on to the men shooting at the butts in the *Luttrell Psalter* another fifty years later again. This is reinforced by the coroners' court reports of tragedies arising from very casual shooting at marks. It seems incredible to us that someone would loose off an arrow in a village just because some bird or other mark appealed to him as a target. But this casual attitude remained a problem in medieval England as the Coventry Leet Books of the fifteenth century make clear. But it reasonable to suggest that men and boys would only do this if it was quite normal for some people at least to use bows in their village.

Notes

1 *Statutes of the Realm*, Vol.1 (London 1735) pp.97–8
2 Downer, L.J. (1972) pp.270–1
3 FitzStephan, William, *Descriptio Londiniensis* in Stow, J., *The Survey of London* (edited by H.B. Wheatley, London,1956) p.508
4 *Calendar of Miscellaneous Inquisitions* Vol.1, p.578
5 *Ibid.*, p.563
6 *Ibid.*, p.553–4
7 Meekings, C.A.F. (ed.), *Crown Pleas of the Wiltshire Eyre1249* (Wiltshire Record Society Vol.XVI, 1961) p.218
8 Hunnisett, R.F. (1961) p.33–4
9 *Ibid.*, p.19

10 *Calendar of Miscellaneous Inquisitions*, Vol.1 1219–1307. p.348
11 *Ibid.*, p.602
12 *Ibid.*, p.610
13 Stewart-Brown, R. (1925)
14 *Calendar of Miscellaneous Inquisitions*, Vol.1, p.611
15 Maitland, F.W., Harcourt, W.V. and Bolland W.C. (eds), *The Eyre of Kent 1313–14* Vol.1 (Seldon Society Vol.24, 1910) p.64
16 Hanawalt, B., *The Ties that Bound: Peasant Families in Medieval England* (Oxford, 1986) pp.272–4
17 For more detail including names see Wadge, R. (2007) pp.243–55
18 British Library catalogue of illuminated manuscripts

V

Breaking the Law

The renown of Robin Hood rested in large part on his skill with a bow and arrow. Many doubts have been cast on the tales of Robin Hood record the deeds of a real medieval Englishman, or are popular entertainments based on the deeds of several outlaws with fictional elements added. However, the tales show that by the time they were composed, people accepted that the bow and arrow were used by ordinary men in a range of illegal activities. These included hunting, which is discussed in the following chapters, violent assaults and efforts to assert what they saw as their rights or rebuff the attempts of overbearing lords and officials to make unreasonable exactions on them. Some of the real criminals were esteemed by ordinary men and women just as much as Robin Hood was. The chronicler, Henry of Knighton for example, approved of some of the actions of the Folville gang who were active in the early decades of the fourteenth century, and called one of the Folvilles 'a fierce, daring and impudent man'.[1] While men committed crimes and gained the dangerous status of outlaw as the penalty, people from most levels in medieval society didn't always accept the judgement of the courts as guidance for their own behaviour towards the outlaws. In an age when law enforcement was very localised, flight beyond the immediate jurisdiction where the offence was committed was a sensible reaction, if the offender feared for his life. At this time it was unlikely that an ordinary man would be pursued to other counties unless he seriously and persistently disturbed the peace. Medieval lay men and women seem to have had a strong enthusiasm for using illegal and violent remedies which might appear to conflict with the strong and ever-present religious belief and practice in their lives.

Court records from medieval England give us the facts of the use of bows and arrows by malefactors, some of whom were declared outlaws by the courts. Bows and arrows tend to occur slightly more frequently in criminal activity later in the thirteenth century and into

the fourteenth century. This trend becomes much more obvious in the latter half of the fourteenth century and through the fifteenth century, a period beyond the scope of this book.

Murders and Assaults

In general murders and assaults with bows and arrows seem to have been done quite openly, since, witnesses, or the victim if he survived, could often identify the assailant(s), so that either the officers of Justice, or the relatives of the victim were able to charge named individuals before the courts. A case from Guildford shows that if the victim's relatives mistakenly identified the perpetrator in the formal accusation, the jury might still discern the real culprit. John Gatyn accused several men of murdering and robbing his son, also named John. However, he withdrew the charges and the jury found that another man, Geoffrey of Middleton, a servant, shot an arrow at John the younger, hitting him in the heart and killing him instantly. Geoffrey was outlawed and later imprisoned at Guilford from whence he escaped.[2] There are very few inquest records where no one is named as responsible for a murder or assault, although convicting men of an offence proved to be another matter. In legal practice in medieval England the drawing of blood was an important measure of the seriousness of an assault, rather than any measure of recovery time.

One of the earliest reports of bows and arrows being used in an assault comes from the end of Richard I's reign in 1199, coincidently the time when many of the later tales of Robin Hood came to be set. Nicholas of Trubwich accused Hugo Esturmi of having broken the king's peace in Sussex in a dispute over land. Hugo was accused of having sent his sons John and Hugo and his nephew Desideratus to Nicholas' house at night 'wickedly and in a premeditated assault'. The three opened a window and finding Nicholas sitting by his fireside shot arrows at him. John wounded him a little in the skin of his throat, Hugo wounded him in his right arm, which was crippled as a result and Desideratus shot him 'in the middle of his testicles'.[3] Even allowing for the difficulty of shooting a bow of whatever length through a window, this was not skilled shooting. The scale of the wounds also suggests that neither the arrows nor the bows were of any great size.

In 1203 William de la Dene accused Simon of Dene and a number of other men including Ailbricht son of Edith of robbery and assault. William recounted that Ailbricht fitted an arrow to the string of his bow on Simon's orders, deliberately aimed at him and wounded him in the stomach. Ailbricht then aimed two more arrows at him. These

accusations were proved by William having had his wound inspected, and the other two arrows being presented in court.[4] Again the standard of shooting seems to have been poor since Ailbricht only managed to give William a slight wound despite having shot three arrows at him. While the court record does not state the extent of the wound, it must have been slight since in the long period before the development of effective antibiotics, wounds which penetrated the stomach or gut were particularly dangerous because of the problem of controlling infection. As with the previous case the proximity of assailant and victim, added to the slight wound inflicted suggests that the bow was not very powerful.

Another much later case from 1261 also shows how hard it could be to inflict serious injury on a man when the conditions for archery were difficult. Peter de Polesdon of Beddington accused Eudo le Jap of assaulting him with a bow and arrow in the twilight. Peter escaped with a wound to his nose and another in his side, neither of which seem to have been serious.[5]

Four cases of assault with bows and arrows in the first decade of the thirteenth century show bows in use in various parts of the country. In the first of two examples from Yorkshire Rainer of Gartun accused Denis of Elreker, who one of a group of men who attacked him, saying that he 'gave him a certain wound in the haunch by a certain arrow.' The second case reads much the same, just the victim and the accused were different.[6] In a case of armed robbery, Adam son of Richard, who was the servant of Simon of Siluede, declared that Hugh Hairen broke into his master's house and committed robbery. He also declared that Hugh wounded him in the hand with an arrow, although it is not explicit that Hugh shot the arrow.[7] In 1207 in Herefordshire Hugh Dobin's widow accused five men of being involved in the death of her husband. One of them, Geoffrey of Norfolk, was accused of having fatally wounded Hugh with a bow and arrow.[8]

In 1220 in Somerset, five men including Henry of Veyn gathered in Robert of Gurnay's house in Farenton. While they were there, Henry of Karevill, Paganus of Arpetr and several others made a premeditated armed assault on them. During this Paganus wounded Henry in the head with an arrow.[9] There is no clear statement in the court record about why this assault was made, although the emphasis on premeditation implies some pre-existing dispute.

Two early cases of racist violence using bow and arrows happened in London around 1238. John Lichefot shot and wounded a Jew and a Jewess with arrows. He took sanctuary in a church, but was persuaded to acknowledge his deeds and leave England. In the other, Richard de Mistel died in prison for similar offences.[10] It is no wonder he died since prisons at this time, and for centuries later were notoriously

unhealthy places. The risks of a long period of imprisonment while awaiting the Justices was one of the reasons why men preferred to flee and become outlaws.

Two later cases show that the offenders might give up a steady job or a decent amount of goods and chattels when they fled the hazards of prison and trial. In 1276 Ralph of Ware and Thomas le Breton were in a boat on the Thames at night when John the servant of Bart le Brianzun appeared on the bank. A quarrel ensued and John shot Ralph with an arrow and wounded him so badly that he died shortly afterwards in the Tower of London. John calmly returned to his master's house, but later fled to avoid justice.[11] A question comes to mind; why was John carrying a bow and arrow on the banks of the Thames at night? The second case was brought before the Derbyshire Eyre of 1281. Walter of Oxford was charged with shooting Richard de Charleton and fatally wounding him in the stomach. Walter also fled and was outlawed. His goods were valued at about 35/-.[12] In both these cases the perpetrator would have been tried for his life so he may have felt that flight was the only choice.

Some of the criminals who used bows and arrows were prepared to use extreme violence without hesitation. In 1270 in Bedfordshire, Emma the daughter of Richard Tory of Southill went to a wood called Houlden to gather wood. Walter Garglof of Stanford who was carrying a bow and a small sheaf of arrows, came upon her, and threw her to the ground and tried to rape her. She shouted and her father came up, but Walter shot an arrow at him which gave him a mortal wound in right side of his forehead. He then shot another arrow which hit Richard in the right side and went into his stomach. Seman of Southill then appeared and asked Walter why he wanted to kill Richard. Walter replied by shooting an arrow at him which hit him in the back 'so that his life was despaired of'. Although Walter was clearly identified he evaded arrest and so was outlawed. He seems to have been a poor man since the only chattel the court could seize was a copper mace.[13] Whatever else can be said about Walter, he was clearly a skilled archer, since he caused serious wounds with each arrow he shot. The description of the second wound Richard received, might suggest a fairly powerful bow to achieve that level of penetration even at close range.

Another case from the same year in Bedfordshire shows the danger of doing your civic duty in medieval England, by answering the call to Hue and Cry. Seven thieves broke into the house of Murielle Braceresse of Astwick and seriously wounded one of the men in the house. Another member of the household escaped and raised the Hue and Cry. William Littlegrom, who lived in the village, came towards the Hue. One of the thieves who was standing in the street outside

Murielle's house, shot him in the right side with a powerful or heavy (*valenti*, the word used in the court record to describe the arrow, means powerful or robust) arrow. He died three weeks later. The description of the arrow suggests that this thief was using a heavy bow shooting heavy arrows. Since no mention is made of it being a broad arrow, it is probable that it had one of the simpler triangular or leaf-shaped heads common at this period.

Two years later in Bedfordshire what seemed to have been a dispute about honour, or respect in modern terms, led to a fatality. Two esquires and four servants came to the house of the Prior of Lanthony's house in Henlow demanding entry and entertainment for John le Burk the Elder. They became angry when told that there was no one in the house with authority to grant this, and they left uttering threats. The following day, John le Burk himself came through Henlow with his household, and threatened the Prior. The Vicar of Henlow tried to make peace but John le Burk's men attacked the house and 'shot Henry son of Adam of Henlow almost to the heart with a small arrow.' They then fled the scene, taking a bow a small sheaf of arrows and a purse.[14] It seems from this that both sides had archery equipment although only John le Burk's men used theirs. This is the second case form the Bedfordshire Coroners' Rolls which used the term 'a small sheaf of arrows'. This was probably a convenient term recording that a few arrows were involved in each case, rather than meaning any particular number.

Sometimes there are cases when the court records do not make it explicit whether the arrow causing the injury was shot or used as stabbing tool. One such occurred in Bedfordshire in 1272. Gerleys, Sir Nicholas Peyvere's servant, came out of Pertenhall with a bow in his hand and met with William of Kendals who was threatening both the Rector of Pertenhall and Sir Nicholas. William immediately attacked Gerleys with an unsheathed sword and struck him on the left arm. Gerleys fled calling unsuccessfully for help. William pursued and Gerleys, feeling that he could not escape, turned and killed William by striking him 'under the left side to the heart with a barbed arrow.'[15] Since Coroners' Court records were usually very accurate in their description of the circumstances of the incident they are covering, this vagueness about quite how William met his end is interesting. The court record does not report that Gerleys shot William, and the description of the fatal wound sounds like what would happen if a right-handed man used an arrow to stab someone. However, Gerleys had a bow and the wound seems to have been deep, which would be difficult to achieve stabbing with a smooth arrow shaft with a barbed head on it. A similar lack of absolute clarity as to whether the fatal arrow was shot or used as a dagger can be found in the records of the

Derbyshire Eyre of 1281. In one, Henry, son of Gilbert de Essovere fatally wounded Richard, son of Emma de Stretton in the stomach, while in the other, John of Waterford was wounded by Ralph Smith of Sipperley. In both cases the assailants fled and so were outlawed and had their goods seized by the Justices. By fleeing Henry was giving up fairly substantial property valued in the court record at 71/10*d*, which may give an indication of his guilt in the matter.[16]

While this may seem nit-picking, the charges brought before medieval coroners or Justices had to be accurate, otherwise the accused could escape justice by pointing out the inaccuracy in the detail of the charge without having to answer the substance of the charge. So, if these records are accurate they may show that men may have often carried bows unstrung, and in difficult circumstances using an arrow as a dagger was the only option.

The dangers of having to participate in the Hue and Cry have been recounted above, but it could be effective as the events following a case of highway robbery recorded by the Bedfordshire coroners in the last quarter of the thirteenth century show. An armed 'unknown felon' standing at the edge of the road stole a good woollen coat and 4*d* from Ralph the Carpenter and a coat of russet from Henry the Hayward. They went and raised the Hue and Cry. The men of the neighbourhood pursued the felon who took shelter in the wood at Putnoe (now a northern suburb of Bedford). Here he refused to surrender and resisted attempts to arrest him with his bow and arrows until Peter, Henry's servant killed him. The unknown robber's chattels were recorded, since they belonged to the king in the circumstances. They were valued at 2/- in total and included a bow and arrows worth 3*d*, a coat in poor condition worth 6*d*, a horn worth 4*d* and two knives worth 3½*d*.[17] The particularly low value put on the bow and arrows, in comparison with the value of the felon's other possessions and also in comparison with the value put on both bows and arrows noted elsewhere in this book, suggests that they were of poor quality, possibly made by the man himself. But, even if the bow and arrows were not of any great quality or power, they were threat enough for the felon to keep the men in the Hue and Cry at bay for a while.

Another case that had similar features took place in Wiltshire in 1288. William Blanchard was brought before the Justices for slaying Roger the Clerk of Somerford. Roger had been charged before the coroner with the murder of Robert Bysshop, but he did not answer the summons to appear at the Coroner's Court. Later, in what seems an act of foolish defiance, Roger came to Somerford (near Chippenham), whereupon the Hue and Cry was called and he was pursued. William did his legally required civic duty and joined the Hue and Cry. Roger resisted the pursuit; the record emphasises that he 'assaulted William

with bow and arrows and afterwards with a drawn sword'. He finally cornered William who, in defending himself, killed Roger. Not surprisingly given the recorded circumstances William was found not guilty of any felony.[18]

Sometimes an attempted assault ended up more like a modern-day gangsters' shoot out. An inquisition from York made in 1287 records that John of Brerele and John Scot argued on Christmas Eve and 'departed in rancour'. Sometime later John of Brerele lay in wait for John Scot, and, as he passed by carrying cloth for his master, shot two arrows at him, wounding him in the arm. John Scot, who declared to the Justices that he 'wished to flee but could not for fear of death' shot back at John of Brerele and killed him. He was also acquitted.[19] It is noteworthy that both men owned and used bows, and that John Scot was carrying his while running an errand for his master. By implication he was carrying it strung and ready for use. It is quite possible that John of Brerele had been making threats so John Scot was prepared for trouble, but if that was the case we could expect the Inquisition account to mention this. John Scot's wound in his arm must have been relatively minor if he could still use his bow to such effect. A similar case reads more like a duel rather than a shoot-out. In Cambridgeshire in 1287 Robert the Forester was accused of killing William Edolf. He was found innocent because William died in a dispute with another man, Henry Hare. William and Henry had what proved to be a fatal encounter in the marsh of Faresheved near Wittlesmare. They each shot an arrow at each other, William was hit on the crown of his head and the arrow penetrated his brain so that he died a month later. Henry was hit on the right side and died two months later.[20]

At least two men with bows and arrows were involved in a complicated disturbance in Morpeth in October 1292. William Sanky, the son of Richard the Engineer, and Honde the Miller were accused of killing William of Morpeth. There was a dispute in 'Bryggestrete' between Watte, a servant of Richard the Engineer and Robert of Thoneby. Robert knocked Watte down and wounded him in the foot with a sword before running off towards the bridge. A Hue and Cry was raised, whereupon William Sanky and Honde the Miller ran out of Richard's house while William of Morpeth, a mason, ran out of a nearby house. These three 'began a quarrel out of that between Watte and Robert.' William of Morpeth bent his bow to shoot but Agnes, wife of Richard interfered and held on to his bow. William knocked her down kicked her and hit her with his sword. William Sanky tried to rescue his mother, where upon William of Morpeth attacked him with his sword, but while doing so, he slipped and fell on his own sword suffering a wound in his right thigh which proved immediately

fatal (did he cut the femoral artery?) At some point in the disturbance Honde shot William of Morpeth in the hand with an arrow.[21] This dispute shows the dangers inherent in the requirements of the Statute of Winchester and the earlier Assizes of Arms that men have weapons in their houses to help maintain the peace as well as for war. Two men appeared with strung bows to join the Hue and Cry in pursuit of Robert of Thoneby, William of Morpeth seems particularly well prepared for potential violence, before he got fatally involved in the dispute.

In 1297 in Dewsbury, Roger the Fuller was arguing (the record says contending) with William Scot, when another man, William Herloc, came up opposite Scot's door with his bow drawn, and prevented Roger from getting away by threatening him. Scot meanwhile felled Roger with a blow across his back with a stick.[22] Herloc was described as '*cum arcu suo tentato*', which could be ambiguous. Given that court records in the thirteenth century sometimes emphasise that a bow was strung, this could easily mean just that but, *tentato* is sometimes applied to other weapons such a knives meaning drawn. In this case, because Herloc seemed to stop Roger escaping by threatening him, it seems reasonable to suggest that he had his bow drawn. This is one of many cases which show the willingness of medieval Englishmen to offer lethal threat on a casual basis. Threatening someone with a bow and arrow needs more planning than using a knife or staff does.

Occasionally the reports of court hearings include information about the bow and arrow used in an offence. Detailed discussion of these bows and arrows can be found in chapter IX, but these accounts are also included here since they provide some evidence of the social standing of either the criminal or the victim. In 1274, Richard le Chanu of Colmworth appealed (brought a charge before the Justices) Wymund le Chanu in a case that may have had some element of family dispute about it.[23] Wymund was accused of having shot Hugh Bel, also of Colmworth, in the thigh with a barbed arrow, shot from a yew bow. Hugh died of his wound which is described as 3in deep, an inch wide and 3 thumbs high. Wymund was acquitted because Richard didn't prosecute the case before the court. The likely explanation for Richard not appearing to pursue the accusation is apparent from elsewhere in the Coroners' Rolls. The actual circumstances of Hugh's death involved another archer. Hugh was Richard's servant, and one day he met with John dil Brok in Grenecroft, Colmworth. They quarrelled and John drew his bow shot Hugh with a barbed arrow, as was recorded in Richard's accusation. John fled and so was outlawed and had his chattels confiscated. John's chattels were valued at 15/10*d* by the Coroner's Court and included two horses and a cart, but no mention is made of a bow or

arrows being found among John's possessions.[24]

A later case records the bow and arrow used in a murder with similar clarity. This case also provided a clear description of the effect of a barbed arrow on a human body. In Leicestershire in 1298, John of Tylton shot and killed Simon of Skeffington with a barbed arrow in a field between their two villages. There seem to have been plenty of witnesses, including Simon's son and John's brother. The record gives a particularly detailed description of the bow and arrow used in this assault, saying that John used a yew bow an ell and a half long and that the arrow was of ash fletched with peacock. Unusually dimensions for the barbed arrowhead were given, it is described as being made of iron and steel and being three thumbs long by two wide. The arrow hit Simon 'on the left side 3in (7.6cm) below the pap' and inflicted a wound 3in (7.6cm) long, 2in (5cm) wide and 6in (15.2cm) deep. Not surprisingly Simon died immediately.[25] The size of the wound is only to be expected given the size of the head, but the depth of the wound suggests that John was using a powerful bow to drive a head of this size so deep. Records of this period only occasionally mention the bow wood, and when they do, all bar one specify the use of yew. Therefore the explicit mention that the bow was of yew may well mark it out as a bow outside the usual run of things at this time, probably only available to an archer of some standing or enthusiasm. The mention of the arrow being fletched with peacock also suggests that the owner was a man of some wealth. The use of peacock fletchings seems to have been a practice among higher social status archers in the thirteenth–fifteenth centuries. It is also interesting to note that the bowstring was recorded as made of hemp, suggesting that at this time even high quality bows used hemp strings. A hundred years later Gaston Phoebus mentioned the use of silk for bowstrings. Admittedly he was of much higher status than anyone involved in this case.[26]

These records make it clear that men of sufficient wealth and interest in archery to acquire good quality bows and arrows, and maybe practise archery as a sport, were just as casually violent as any other medieval Englishmen.

While there is no information about the bow Roger le Fendour of Charleton used in Cambridgeshire in 1300 to shoot John de Laver of Brackele the arrow is mentioned. John was found in his house, dying of a wound in the side of his head from a 'welsh arrow'. An inquest named Roger as the killer, so he was beheaded.[27] There is no indication of the cause of this crime.

The records of the Eyre of Kent held 1313–14 include one or two records of crimes committed using bows and arrows. One concerns Reginald of Tickenhurst, who seems to have been a 'career' criminal

who had committed a number of robberies and other offences. Reginald, on hearing that John of Bethersden, a constable of the peace, had a warrant for his arrest, went with others one night to John's house. But the Hue and Cry was raised so Reginald fled. A few days later Reginald sent John Isoude 'that was notoriously his spy and accomplice in the commission of felonies', to see when Reginald might find an opportunity to kill the constable. However, John the constable was warned and he arrested John Isoulde. As a result Reginald set out with three companions to free John Isoulde and kill the constable. In an ensuing struggle Reginald drew his bow in an attempt to kill the constable, but the Hue and Cry was so pressing that he and his accomplices had to flee. The constable now summoned Reginald and his men to surrender themselves, but they did nothing and so were pursued. A little later the constable had a chance to arrest Reginald, but Reginald, who was fitting an arrow to his bow to shoot the constable, was killed by one of the constable's men.[28] Although he was a known criminal, there is no suggestion that Reginald was in the legal sense an outlaw, the label commonly applied to Robin Hood. The reason for this was that Reginald, despite his apparent reputation, had yet to be charged before a court, since outlawry was a penalty imposed through a court hearing. But for all that he is an example of a habitual criminal who used a bow and arrow as his weapon of choice.

The court records concerning the death of Robert of Esnyngton in Staffordshire in 1314 are better known than almost any other in the period because of the descriptions of the bows and arrows involved. Margaret, Robert's widow, named fifteen men in her appeal to the court, six of whom used bows and arrows, while the others used a two-handed sword, staffs and a dagger to inflict a range of potentially fatal wounds. The appeal has an almost poetic tone with the grim refrain (with slight variations of word order) 'of which wound he died in her arms, and so if he was not killed by the wounds made by the said [various other accused] then he was killed by the wound inflicted by'. A fuller discussion of the bows listed in Margaret's accusation can be found in a later chapter, all that needs to be said here is that Margaret listed six different bows and arrows, each of which inflicted a potentially fatal wound on her husband. For nearly two years the accused were in the custody of the Marshall, which should not be taken to mean that they were imprisoned, as Margaret pursued her suit, until finally she did not appear to press the suit in the Easter term of the court in 1315, and the accused were acquitted after a formal hearing.[29] It is very difficult to know what to make of this case, the fact that Margaret did not appear before the court may mean that she had died in the interim, since by not appearing to support her suit she put herself in jeopardy for presenting a false suit. The very detailed

appeal statement she made reads a bit unrealistically since she alleges her husband received six serious arrow wounds besides other serious wounds, but that he still died in her arms. Taking her account literally, all that needs to be said is that it must have been very difficult for her to hold her dying husband with six arrows shafts sticking out of him.

In London on a Sunday in 1326, 'a great number of apprentices of the Bench of the counties of York and Norfolk came running out of the gate of Aldresgate [Aldgate] with swords drawn and quarrelling among themselves…' As a result of this disturbance the church bells were rung in alarm and a large crowd gathered. David Arpada (is this a phonetic version of a Welsh name David ap Adam mangled through Welsh and London accents?), a servant in the household Sir Nicholas of Hougate a clerk, shot at the crowd with his bow. In this he seems to have been egged on by his fellow servants. Whatever his intention was is not clear, but the arrow hit a skinner, Nicholas de la Fermorye, and fatally wounded him in the stomach. David and one of the other servants fled, and it is recorded that they left (or had) no chattels for the Coroner's Court to seize.[30] The record is quite clear that David used his own bow, not one belonging to the household. This is another example of a very casual attitude when using a lethal implement like a bow. It is possible the servants dared David to shoot with the idea of frightening someone rather than killing them and that David was not as good an archer as he needed to be.

One of the significant differences between the legal system in medieval England and how it has developed to the present day, is the way in which the verdict in medieval courts could depend on the social standing and reputation of the main parties in a case in a much more overt way than it can now. The position of either the plaintiff or the victim within the local community could affect their ability to present witnesses in court. This can be clearly demonstrated in what seems to have been a dispute between two peasants on the manor of Wakefield in 1326. Richard, son of William accused Richard, son of Amabilla of driving him into his house by aiming at him with his bow stretched and arrow in place.[31] Richard, son of William was fined for bringing a false claim to the court. He may have been making it up but it is more likely that he couldn't find any witnesses, either because he was unpopular, or because his alleged assailant was able to persuade any witnesses not to appear in court.

Bows as Clubs

Modern longbow archers are always told to be careful with their bows and protect them against knocks, particularly if they own self bows.

However, the medieval archer seems not to have seen things the same way, and was quite prepared to beat someone with a bow (presumably unstrung). In the following cases, there is no indication that the man was having to defend himself desperately, and did not have time to string his bow, just that, in the heat of the moment, it seemed simpler to hit someone with the bow. Medieval men would have been as aware as we are that it is better to keep a bow unstrung until you need to use it to avoid the bow developing a set. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries carrying a bow strung does not seem to have been illegal in itself, outside the bounds of the royal forest at least, but it could be regarded as a sign of intent to use the bow, which could be questionable. In the fourteenth century and later centuries specific prohibitions began to be made against carrying bows strung.

While the obvious danger of participation in the Hue and Cry was that the pursued would use violence to escape, another danger was that members of the Hue and Cry could be overzealous or use the Hue as cover for acting upon a grudge against the pursued man. Sometime in the 1240s in Wiltshire there was an incident which showed the need for a man taking part in the Hue and Cry to be careful about what he did or encouraged others to do. Peter Gruffyn said that he skinned and butchered a beast which had been hunted and killed 'by a certain sergeant' outside the town of Herchefunt (Urchfont). He sent William, a groom, to carry a limb to the sergeant. Hugh de Mara and two others came upon William and demanded the limb from him. William obviously refused since Hugh hit William on the head many times with a bow and beat him to the ground, before taking the limb. The Hue and Cry was raised and things got complicated. Hugh was beaten to death by Adam le Lechur (and possibly others unidentified) and Peter was found guilty of inciting the murder by shouting 'strike, strike', and impeding the pursuit of Hugh's assailants. Both Peter and Adam were hanged.[32] It is possible that this was some dispute arising from hunting, with Hugh claiming that it was his game that Peter butchered, if it was it would be an easy explanation of why Hugh was carrying a fairly robust bow. But one thing that is clear is that being part of a legitimate Hue and Cry did not entitle a man to incite the death of the pursued man, unless as has been noted elsewhere, that man resisted arrest.

This case implies that in the first half of the thirteenth century in Wiltshire, men did not carry bows as a matter of course. Hugh was the only person in whole incident who was mentioned as carrying a bow, and he carried it unstrung and used it as a club. His assailants killed him with blows from a staff, one of the commonest weapons found in reports of violence in medieval England.

Another case of impulsive use of a bow as a club happened

sometime in the 1250s when, as part of a dispute over a hare skin, John of Budeho struck Thomas son of Adam on the head with a bow.[33] In 1266 at Newcastle upon Tyne William of Rodom was dining at a friend's house one day. While there his eight-year-old son took in a stray greyhound. On his way home William was attacked by Adam le Escot and Fyni le Escot, dragged from his horse, beaten and robbed of his horse, sword and surcoat. Richard Mansell, bailiff at a nearby manor rescued him and took him back to the manor until things quietened down. After a while, William set off back to his own house. When he got there he found Adam and Fyni trying to break in. One of them hit him twice on the head with a bow, but William stabbed Adam in the struggle. He was acquitted since he was acting in self-defence.[34] The implication in the story is that the greyhound belonged to Adam and Fyni, and that they were taking revenge on William for his interference with their dog. It is possible, since they had both a bow and a greyhound, that they were hoping to do some illegal hunting.

In Bedfordshire in 1273 Robert Sirlock and his wife Margaret met up with Henry Sirlock (no relationship was mentioned), Benet Bonde and Henry of Cornwall. Robert asked Henry of Cornwall for the hens he owed him, and Henry agreed to hand them over. However, a little later a quarrel broke out between the two Sirlocks and Henry of Cornwall. Henry struck Robert Sirlock 'a small blow' above the left ear with his bow. Robert died the next day although he had returned home without any problem. Henry of Cornwall fled and was outlawed.[35] Since even the court account recorded that the blow struck by Henry of Cornwall as small, it is not necessary to assume that he necessarily used a heavy bow. It may be that Robert died not from the blow but from the stress of the whole incident.

In 1274 the men of Little Boford a township in Bedfordshire gathered together, possibly in defiance of the Prior of St Neot's. One of the men struck Lawrence, an esquire of the Prior, on the arm with a bow and a near riot resulted. Whether this was a real assault with someone trying to club squire Lawrence with a bow or whether it was a case of the Prior of St Neot's household using the fact of someone bumping into Lawrence in a disorderly press as a way of taking legal revenge against the men of the township is unclear since the coroners' record is frustratingly vague about the details of the incident. But the incident demonstrates again that, very ordinary men in any community might own a bow and carry it at a time of alarm.[36]

A case from Staffordshire in 1284 is another where both parties carried bows. John of Bispeston came to Colwich and met John of Kercy who he had had summoned before the chapter of the Rural Dean for fornication. John of Kercy then lay in wait for him and shot

two arrows at him, one of which wounded him 'through the middle of the left arm'. John of Kercy then pursued his victim to the wall of Colwich churchyard where John of Bispeston turned and hit John of Kercy on the head, resulting in his death three days later.[37] It seems likely that John of Bispeston was carrying his bow unstrung, and being surprised and wounded was unable to string it. However, it must have been substantial to inflict a fatal wound when used as a staff.

A group of cases from the end of the thirteenth century suggest that more men were carrying substantial bows. In the first Thomas of Hylton was accused of assaulting Gilbert of Astey on Palm Sunday. He allegedly 'broke his head and drew blood with a bow' in Hyperum wood (Hipperholme in Yorkshire).[38] Twelve years later Richard of Sausemer claimed that Richard Suart assaulted him 'knocking him on the head with a bow so that he fell down'.[39]

In 1300 near York, Henry of Steynford was sent by Sir Henry Percy's steward to levy a distress. A local man, Thomas the son of Robert of Middleton, came up to prevent this. He hit Henry on the head with a yew bow, causing a wound that streamed blood and breaking his bow into pieces. He then pursued Henry with a long knife until Henry, feeling that he could not escape, drew his sword and killed Thomas. Henry was acquitted because he acted in self-defence and was 'loyal and of good reputation.'[40] This case shows what many modern archers know, that yew, for all its virtues as a bow wood is not as physically tough or resistant to misuse as lesser bow woods.

The Justices of the Eyre of Kent held in 1313–14 dealt with a case where a man being struck with a bow was just the start of the incident. Roger of Warshborough and Peter Maynard of Winchelsea were quarrelling and Roger struck Peter on the head with his bow. As Peter was trying to return the blow, Reginald of Ashbourne and Hugh Adam, his arms bearer, came upon the scene. Reginald ordered Hugh to shoot Peter, which he did using a barbed arrow. Peter died of the wound three days later. Reginald and Hugh were outlawed for non attendance at the court, but their chattels could not be seized because they were strangers to Kent.[41] One thing that is clear in this puzzling case is that Roger was carrying an unstrung bow when he fell to arguing with Peter. There is no hint as to why he was doing this. Similarly, there is no mention of any prior acquaintance with Reginald of Ashbourne, who must have been a man of some standing, since Hugh is recorded as his arms bearer. Since Hugh used a barbed arrow to shoot Peter it may be that he and his master were prepared for hunting rather than for war but it is no more than an implication.

The case of the assault on Henry of Steynford is the only one of these cases of someone was wounded by being hit with a bow where

the bow wood is mentioned. All these cases raise the major questions; firstly what sort of wood were the bows made from so that in general they stood up to being used as clubs: and what were their dimensions? It is interesting that the one case where a bow is recorded as being made of yew is the only one where the bow broke. Also, while there is no comment made of the length of the bows, long or short bows would be equally useful for hitting people with. There is a discussion of the dimensions of both medieval bows and modern replicas made in a range of woods in chapter IX, which makes it clear that bows could be effective weapons to beat someone with.

Criminal Acts by Clerics and their Households

By the early thirteenth century nearly 1 in 20 of the adult males in England were clerks.[42] The majority of these were in minor orders. This meant that they were tonsured, were expected to have had enough education to have basic literacy, and were not meant to carry weapons nor go into taverns. But until the end of the thirteenth century at least those in minor orders could marry. These men often became administrators in households great and small because of their education. They also served as vicars in the less wealthy or more rural livings. Those in major orders which included the priests, deacons and rectors that the average English man and woman of the time might meet fairly regularly were expected to be chaste. Regardless of rank within the Church, all these enjoyed 'Benefit of Clergy', which meant that when any one of them was accused of an offence, including those against Forest Law, he did not have to provide pledges for his appearance before the Justices, since his bishop was automatically responsible for presenting the accused clerk before the court at the appropriate time. This removed clerks from the danger of being held in prison because they could not find sufficient pledges, which threatened laymen. After the trial a bishop could claim a convicted clerk who as a result might avoid prison. But clergy still had to pay fines if convicted of offences, and these were often higher than those inflicted on laymen.[43] Increasingly Justices tested men who claimed benefit of clergy by expecting them to prove literacy. The evidence of court records shows that clerics were men of the people who indulged in many of the activities and pastimes of the ordinary people. This included criminal activity, taking the law into their own hands and illegal hunting. However, they didn't appear in the court records of the twelfth, thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries accused of crimes of violence using bows and arrows as often as they did of illegal hunting.

There were a number of clerics involved in a dispute which came to

the king's Courts in 1238. They used or threatened to use a range of weapons including bows and arrows in furtherance of this dispute. Simon son of Warin of Brackley threatened death while holding a drawn bow and arrows. He clearly was particularly actively involved. While another, Adam of Walton, was described as carrying a bow and arrows as part of the disturbance.[44]

In 1286 Thomas the serving man of Sir Roger a chaplain wounded a man 'with a certain arrow'.[45] Since Sir Roger was present when the assault happened and there is no record that he made any effort to interrupt it, Thomas may well have been acting with his master's instruction or encouragement.

One of the leading figures in two decades of disorder in Leicestershire and Rutland in the fourteenth century was Richard de Folville, a cleric. He was one of six brothers who all exploited the weak control Edward II had over his realm, and continued their activities in to the much more forceful Edward III's reign. They were all in turn brought to justice, or at least to keeping the king's peace by the 1340s. In late 1340 or early 1341, Richard and some of his followers took refuge from their pursuers in the church at Teigh in Rutland, a living Richard had held as rector for a number of years. Richard and his companions shot arrows at their pursuers, killing one and wounding some others. This was not a case of Richard and his band claiming sanctuary in a church, but that the church was the most easily defended place they could find. But the forces of Justice broke into the church, dragged Richard outside and beheaded him on the spot.[46] A bloody conclusion to a career wherein the bow and arrow was frequently used with criminal intent.

Men Taking the Law into their Own Hands

Men and women in medieval England do not seem to have any deep ingrained respect for the rule of law, as opposed to a very clear understanding of what they perceived as their dues and rights. This meant that 'the preservation of public order was very often the biggest problem the king had to face.'[47] This applied just as much in the reigns powerful kings such Edward I or Edward III as it did in the reigns of their much less secure successors. Indeed right at the end of his reign, Edward I had to make great efforts to restore law and order, having let them go somewhat while he concentrated on his military activities, and subverted them to a degree by his own behaviour.[48] Throughout the period men of all classes were ready to use violence or the threat of it to pursue their interests. In part this may have meant that they just couldn't be bothered to follow the legal process. But with the decline of the general Eyre in the fourteenth century, men

seem to have lost confidence in both the competence and the independence of the Justices and courts that succeeded it. As a result they pursued their disputes in other ways. Despite this apparent lawlessness, men and women used the developing legal mechanisms to pursue disputes, particularly by obtaining writs from the King's Court, a process that started in Henry II's reign. But it was one thing to successfully obtain a writ from the King's Court in your support, and another matter entirely to have it enforced. There is evidence that from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries that, despite increasing access to the royal courts, men also used force to obtain remedies more regularly. This seems to have been the way of it for all social classes.

The records of the Surrey Eyre of 1235 include a rather complicated case. The Steward of the Earl of Cornwall brought a complaint that when his colleagues, the Earl's Bailiffs were lodging in Wygot of Horsley's house they were attacked. Wygot seems to have been a serjeant, so a man of some means who would have a relatively substantial house. For unspecified reasons, Richard, Wygot's son, with many other unidentified men, attacked the house, and he shot at least two arrows into the house. Wygot was fatally wounded by a bolt. The jury attested that Richard and his companions shot both arrows and bolts at the house.[49] If the jury swore that both arrows and bolts were shot during the assault, it is likely that this was because both were found after the event. Having both would suggest that the assailants were in the habit of hunting, the bolts being invaluable for small game. Not all the reports of accidents that happened while men practised archery, recounted in the previous chapter, mention the use of bolts or blunt arrows, but some do so and this might be another explanation for why Richard and his companions were carrying both arrows and bolts. In either case it suggests that some if not all of the assailants were archers of some skill. While this is not the only case of a bolt causing fatal injury, the fact one fatally wounded Wygot suggests that one of the assailants was using a fairly powerful bow.

In a case which showed the delays inherent in the system of administering justice through the Courts of Eyre, William Bud charged Henry de Brewer before the Eyre of 1258–9 with an offence which he alleged happened thirteen years earlier. He claimed that Henry and a band of unnamed men armed swords, axes, iron forks (pitchforks?) and bows and arrows beat him and seized his goods. Henry responded that he was only acting to recover a debt.[50]

In Somerset in about 1255, Thomas of Montesoret, his brother Robert and ten other men armed with bows and arrows, spears, knives and iron forks were accused of harvesting three acres of corn belonging to Roger of Illeford. Thomas denied both the use of force

and harvesting by night (while there wasn't a formal curfew in rural areas, any nocturnal activity was viewed with suspicion), claiming that the corn came from his own land.[51]

The weaponry alleged to have been used in these two cases provides an interesting example of what a group of thirteenth-century Englishmen could lay their hands on if needs be. The swords are the only certain weapons in the group, the axes, bows and arrows might be weapons of war but are more likely to be just part of the agricultural and domestic equipment of households of the time while the iron forks are clearly agricultural tools.

In 1258 Ralph of Lambeth charged Reginald of Briddinghurst with using force of arms, namely swords, bows and arrows, to drive him out of his messuage which comprised 100 acres of arable and 30 acres of pasture in Peckham and East Greenwich.[52]

In 1259 William of Heminghersy and John le Roc were charged with wounding John Spynard and Geoffrey Poynant. William and John claimed that they were trying to recover a beast of William's that the Prior of Bilsington had impounded. As they were attempting this, John Spynard and Geoffrey 'who were with the Prior' assaulted them and pursued them with clubs. So John le Roc defended himself with his bow and shot arrows at them, one of which wounded John in the head.[53]

In 1270 two men of some social and financial standing locally came to blows over the possession of the freehold of Souldrop church and its lordship in Bedfordshire. Hugh Bossard of Knotting bought the seisin of the church and its lordship from John of Souldrop by buying land that was part of the lordship. Having done this, Hugh and his companions settled down in the church for the night. During the night Brother Hubert of Chelsham, master of the hospital at Melchbourne, came up to the church with a body of men and asked Hugh and his companions what they were doing on the fee of the hospital. Hugh replied that he was there of right and was not leaving. Hubert asked them to come out but they refused, so he and his men assaulted the church using bows and crossbows. They then attempted to burn the church door. Meanwhile, Hugh and his men, who had obviously come prepared for trouble, defended themselves, shooting arrows out of the church at their attackers, one of whom was struck in the left eye by a barbed arrow. The man died three days later.[54] The use of a barbed arrow may suggest that Hugh and his men were more experienced in hunting archery than military archery. As in a number of other cases there may have been earlier antagonism between Hugh and Hubert since Knotting and Melchbourne are near each other. Melchbourne hospital belonged to the Knights of St John, and this dispute demonstrates that their local representatives in England were quite

prepared to maintain what they saw as their rights by force of arms, just as the Order did on a much larger scale in the Mediterranean.

In 1275 there seems to have been a violent end to a dispute over land and rent, Richard de Bretton sent his son Michael to collect rent from William of Letterby. Michael seems not to have talked to William about the rent, but just took a steer, a cow and two heifers in lieu. William armed himself with a bow and arrows and caught up with Michael 'on the King's highway. There he beat Michael (possibly using the bow as a staff), drew blood and recovered his beasts. William seems to have been successful in the subsequent court appearance in denying any rent owed but both he and Richard were pledged to keep the peace.[55]

In the same year in Yorkshire a dispute between noble households blew up. Four men swore before the court of the manor of Wakefield that John of Eland sent men including his son Hugh, into lands held by Earl Warenne where they seized seven cattle worth 33/4*d* and a bow and arrows and took the booty into the Earl of Lincoln's lands. Since no value had been put on the bow and arrows taken, the case was dismissed. But the complainants did not give up and presented the case again with all the information included; the bow was valued at 2*d* and ten arrows at 4*d*. They also claimed Hugh of Eland and his companions shot at Earl Warenne's men who raised the Hue and Cry in response.[56] If the valuation of the bow is realistic, 2*d* is very low compared with other valuations and purchase prices of bows around this date noted elsewhere, particularly those bought for use by archers in the employ of Edward I. As with other cases where such a low valuation was put on a bow it suggests that the bow was of no real character, perhaps made by a man for his own use. Hugh and his men seem to have had some interest in bows and arrows since they shot at Earl Warennes's men, so they may have taken it for their own use, or just to prevent it being used against them. It is worth while noting that both John de Warenne Earl of Surrey and Henry de Lacy Earl of Lincoln were close associates of Edward I so there is little reason to believe this was anything more than a purely local dispute.

The legendary Robin Hood is the best-known medieval gang leader, but there were a number of others with more certain historical existence. One such was Malcolm Musard who was active in Worcestershire in the first three decades of the fourteenth century. In 1304 he agreed to help Godfrey Crombe, the evicted rector of Weston sub-Edge. Godfrey lead Musard and his gang to Weston where they broke into the rector's house and stole foodstuffs and other goods. Later the gang members used their bows to shoot at the manor house and the lord of the manor's servants. A month later Musard repeated the raid.[57] These events seem to be a concerted effort to teach the

local leaders of the community a lesson on Godfrey's behalf, and probably frighten them into silence. This is surprising since it all happened in Edward I's reign. In the last decade of his reign, Edward focussed his formidable energies more on his attempts to gain suzerainty over Scotland, than he did on maintaining the king's peace, which had been a matter he had previously been more diligent about.

Alcohol

The making, importing, selling and drinking of alcohol was as much part of life in medieval England as it is now. Imported alcohol, mainly wine but some ale as well, was either consumed in the houses of the middling and higher classes, or was sold in some taverns in larger towns. Ale in various forms was literally the every day drink of the majority of the men and women of England in the more prosperous decades of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. As in so many aspects of life brewing in this period was very localised, with innkeepers and ale wives brewing as they had time and resources. Taverns and alehouses were popular social centres in the towns and villages of medieval England. Arguments and fights fuelled by alcohol are not new, just that there have been no reports in the twenty-first century of people using bows and arrows in them. However it was different in medieval England.

One of the earliest cases happened in Devon in the 1240s. Rose of Bokland had made her house in Sutton, about 14 miles north east of Exeter, into a tavern. One day a local man, Thomas Kouke and his wife Mabel came to the tavern, as did Margery of Totwell 'whom Thomas was accused of frequenting lecherously.' Mabel and Margery quarrelled and fought, and Alard, Rose's son, put Mabel out of the tavern. Mabel was angry about this. She went to her son Nicholas and told him about Alard throwing her out of the tavern and that 'Margery had committed a trespass against her.' Nicholas went to the tavern in high dudgeon to thrash Margery. But, Alard prevented him and threw him out. Nicholas was very angry at this, and went home, collected his brother William Kok, and that evening they went to attack Rose and Alard's tavern with bows and arrows. Alard defended the house, and while there is no clear mention of him shooting back, given what follows he may have done so. He seems to have barricaded himself into the tavern, but Nicholas managed to break down the door and get in. In the ensuing struggle Alard wounded Nicholas severely with an arrow so that he died shortly afterwards. In what seems a hard judgement, since the court accepted Alard's plea that he was acting in self-defence, and found that Nicholas' death arose by misadventure, rather than a felonious act, Alard was outlawed.[58] This may be a clear

demonstration of local reputation affecting a verdict in that Alard may have been unable to find anyone to swear oaths in support of him. The verdict may also have meant the end of Rose's tavern since Alard who seems to have been a very handy young man, was clearly heavily involved in running the place.

In 1256 Walter, son of Iliff, and Hugo the son of Fabri of Healy fell in with each other in a tavern in Northumberland. At some point there was a dispute and Walter knocked Hugo to the ground and fatally stabbed him in the side with an arrow that he had tucked in his belt.[59] The reference to Walter having the arrow in his belt fits in with one or two early manuscript illustrations where an archer is shown with arrows tucked through his ordinary belt, but there is no mention in the record of him carrying a bow. It would seem an odd and slightly awkward thing to do to carry an arrow in your belt if you didn't have a bow to go with it. Perhaps Walter had propped his bow in a corner of the tavern as he arrived to keep it out of the way. Moreover, the lack of mention of a bow may not be significant since court records were concerned solely with the circumstances of the event that was before the court for consideration. If a bow wasn't used in the assault then the court record would most likely not mention it.

A case was presented at York in 1268 which involved a wedding party, bows and arrows and a brawl. A certain stranger who was newly married took his wife and the wedding party to Byrun (Byron, South Yorkshire). William Selisaule asked for a ball (*pelota*) as was the custom. The wedding party didn't have one but gave a pair of gloves as a pledge that they would give one. Other men of Byrun came up to the wedding party demanding a ball and didn't believe it when they were told that one was pledged. A brawl followed in which the men of the wedding party who admitted to being slightly drunk, assaulted the men of Byrun with axes, bows and arrows, wounding 'very many'. William heard the noise of the brawl and ran up to 'appease the dispute.' William, son of Ralph of Rotil, shot an arrow which hit him in the breast 'so that he thought he had got his death'. William, son of Ralph, was preparing to shoot again, so William Selisaule thought that his only chance was to hit him to hinder his drawing the bow. He did so but another man was hit by the deflected arrow and died.[60] Several matters catch the attention in this account. Firstly, the wedding party seems to have been surprisingly well armed. Secondly, William, son of Ralph, must have been shooting his bow at very close range. Finally, even allowing for a sense of melodrama which sometimes creeps into the court records, most notably into the account of the murder of Robert of Esyngton given above, William Selisaule seems to have been very active for a man who thought that he had received a wound that would be the death of him.

In Buckinghamshire in 1284, Henry of Verney seems to have gone peaceably to an ale house. Once he got there, John of Penkriche insulted him and attacked him with a sword. Not surprisingly, Henry left the alehouse, but John followed him and shot two arrows at him. He then put down his bow and drew his sword. Henry defended himself with a stick, and John died of his injuries. It seems reasonable to suggest that John was at least part drunk since he attacked Henry with a range of weapons to no effect. There is no suggestion in the court record that there had been any earlier dispute between John and Henry, so this may be a case of alcohol-fuelled aggression.

A Staffordshire tavern in 1290 was the scene of the start of an argument that ended in death. John, the son of Robert de la Hoo went to a tavern where he met John Adam who accused him of immorality with Juliana, who was probably his daughter (the record is damaged at this point). When John left the tavern, Richard of Bradeleye met him on the road and wounded him with an arrow. John attempted to escape, but Richard pursued him with a strung bow and wounded him again. Richard cornered John, and clearly closed in to finish the fight since John killed him with a 'Danish axe'.[61] Although it is not made clear Richard seems to have felt a common grievance with John Adam, and seems to have attempted to punish John son of Robert without recourse to the courts. Since John, son of Robert, received two arrow wounds before striking Richard a fatal axe blow, it seems reasonable to suggest that either they were both glancing wounds, or, perhaps more likely, Richard's bow was not very powerful so he was shooting fairly small arrows.

In 1301 William, the son Peter of Bromham, a nephew of the vicar of Wootton, Stephen de Rivers, William the Cobbler and Margery le Whyte, left a tavern in Bedford together heading towards Wootton. A quarrel arose among them, and William 'the vicar's nephew' noticing that John Hoberynge was 'innocently following them', drew his bow and shot at him with a barbed arrow. Margery tried to stop the quarrel but was accidently fatally wounded in the throat by the arrow. The fatal arrow was valued at 1*d*. William fled justice and so was outlawed. As a footnote on this case William was pardoned for the death and his outlawry soon afterwards because of his military service in Edward I's wars in Scotland.[62] Did he serve as an archer? Unfortunately the records don't say but it seems quite possible.

Bows, Arrows and Crime

How often did bows and arrows feature in cases murder or assault brought before either king's Justices or coroners' Courts? In the cases of assault brought before the Durham Quarter Sessions staffs, swords,

knives or clubs were used more commonly than bows and arrows. The same general picture is found in other court records of the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It is clear that when preparing to commit an act of violence, or answer the Hue and Cry, some men relied on a bow and arrows but these were always a minority. In part this arose because a bow and arrow could not be used on impulse or explosive rage in the way that a stick, staff or knife could in a time when all laymen carried an all-purpose knife. When a man used a bow and arrow in an act of violence we can be sure that he had gone out prepared for trouble since a bow has to be strung first before it can be used. Truly impulsive use of a bow can be found in those cases where a bow was used as a staff to beat someone. The most bizarre case of men being prepared for trouble by carrying bows happened in the Yorkshire wedding party brawl. A more ordinary example is another Yorkshire case, that of John Scot, who carried a bow and arrows with his master's goods because he expected trouble from John of Brerele. Without wanting to make a great deal from these two very small cases, do they demonstrate that more of an archery tradition existed in the North than in other parts of the country? This was certainly demonstrated at the Battle of the Standard over 100 years earlier. The importance of accuracy in the records of alleged offences presented before the Justices has already been noted. When a court record specifically mentions bows and arrows being used it was accurate, not just using a form of words. As a result we can be fairly confident that the proportion of criminal activities that we know about that involved the use of bows and arrows truly reflected the relative use of bows and arrows in crime at the time. This is very different from suggesting that we know of all the crimes committed in a given century.

Bows were used in a number of cases to shoot into buildings through windows or in defence of a building shooting out of them. While it is easier to use a shorter bow in either case there is nothing in the accounts that allows any certain conclusion to be drawn about the bows used, except that since the arrows inflicted slight wounds in a number cases it is likely that lightweight bows and small arrows were being used. Also since many of the arrows shot either missed or inflicted slight wounds it leaves the impression that the level of skill of many of the archers was not very high. One clear exception to this was Walter Garglof who inflicted serious injury with each arrow shot. No doubt one consequence of the emphasis the Assizes of Arms and the Statute of Winchester put on men owning bows and arrows, and of Edward I's regular employment of bodies of archers in his armies was to improve the quality of bows and arrows owned by many ordinary men and their level of skills.

Many of these accounts show how readily a minor dispute could

escalate into potentially fatal violence. Sometimes bows and arrows were used in this escalation, since they were something that some men had in their houses. The case of Nicholas and William's assault on Rose of Buckland's tavern is a clear example of this with the two men collecting their bows from their house to make the assault. These cases provide the best evidence for the bow and arrow just being part of life.

Overall, the cases outlined in this chapter give an idea of the ways men used bows and arrows in criminal activities before the mid-fourteenth century. These men were part of the tradition of popular archery in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in medieval England and Wales, which was the nursery of the archery skills which won the great military successes by the English and Welsh longbowmen in Europe. But there was a more direct link between criminal activities where the malefactor may have used a bow and the development of the military archer. An offender could gain a pardon through serving in the king's armies. A case from Bedfordshire where a man was pardoned for a murder because of his service in Scotland is noted above. But by the time that Edward III was raising his armies for his campaigns in France in the 1340s, pardoning criminals for their military service happened on a large scale. Perhaps as many as 1,500 were pardoned for the campaigns between 1339 and 1347.[63] Once the longbowman's reputation was established, popular tales about outlaw heroes such as Robin Hood made much of the ordinary man using the bow since by the last decades of the fourteenth century being a bowman seems to have become part of the self-image of the Englishman.

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VI

Hunting Practices in Medieval England

A great deal is known about the theory and practice of hunting in medieval Western Europe because several detailed treatises on hunting written by noble enthusiasts of the period have survived. Information on hunting practice in medieval England gained from these books is complemented by the data from financial and legal records. These come mainly from royal administration, but can also be found in the administrative records of the great magnates, both lay and clerical. The involvement of the largest social groups in society, namely the craftsmen and ordinary working men and women living in both the rural and urban areas was limited. They made and supplied accoutrements and equipment for horses and hounds; they made bows, arrows and other hunting weapons; they made up the varied range of servants including huntsmen, foresters, grooms, and feuterers, the men who looked after the hounds. They might well hunt all sorts of game at their lord's behest, whether he was present or not but, what many of them could not do was hunt legally on their own behalf.

The two most widely used methods of hunting large animals were '*par force*' and bow and stable hunting.[1] The third method, using snares and traps, was only used by poachers after deer by stealth or foresters and huntsmen tasked with ridding hunting preserves of pests such as wolves. *Par force* hunting, the name derives from the term hunting '*par force de chiens*', that is through the strength or power of the hounds, was hunting in its most complex form in England and Europe. Up to four types of hound were used in this type of hunting; greyhounds, alaunts, mastiffs and running hounds. Greyhounds hunted by sight, having been held in waiting for the game to run past them, whereupon they could use their speed to chase and pull down the game. The alaunt was essentially a heavier, slower, fiercer greyhound, often used against powerful game such as boar and bears. Running hounds hunted by scent and so were used to find and start the game.

Mastiffs seem to have been heavier and stronger than alaunts, and when they were used in hunting it was in a similar role where their power and ferocity was necessary. In general though, mastiffs seem to have been used more as guard dogs and had lower status that the other three types of hound. Three of these types of hound appear in the records of illegal hunting outlined in the following chapter. But, *par force* hunting has little relevance to an account of popular archery in medieval England, since it did not involve bowmen. Instead it required both mounted and foot huntsmen equipped with specialized spears and swords, relays of different types of hound, and, since it almost inevitably involved long chases, enormous estates. While it was practised in England, it was less important than bow and stable hunting, which was practised by all classes of landowner from the king downwards. Indeed one recent author suggests that the population growth of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries restricted the space available for *par force* hunting so that the alternative method of bow and stable hunting was taken up by the aristocracy.[2] The discussion of the death of William Rufus below makes it clear that the Norman kings practised bow and stable hunting, demonstrating that this type of hunting was practised by all levels of society throughout the wider medieval period in England.

The pressures on land use in both large and small estates were slightly more complex than just the needs of a rapidly increasing rural peasant population. The population of England increased by perhaps 150 per cent between the compilation of the Domesday Book and the first decade of the fourteenth century. By the early thirteenth century there had been a period of significant price inflation, while rental incomes did not increase at the same rate.[3] This put a squeeze on the financial position of many landholders. Yet the later thirteenth century was a period when the number of private parks increased rapidly.[4] These parks were owned by the great magnates as well as the lesser aristocracy and gentry who owned parks in emulation of the great lords. This could lead to quite extravagant land use in local areas, for example, by about 1300 Charnwood Forest was ringed by nine hunting parks.[5] So at a time when the needs of an increasing population meant that a greater area of land needed to be available for agriculture, a relatively large amount of land in this locality was preserved to satisfy the leisure and status needs of a very few.

There were persistent attacks on the extent of the royal forests by all levels of free men in England, leading the kings from Henry II onwards to promise to reduce the extent of the forests to that existing in the time of their predecessor. But it was not until the Forest Charter was issued and reissued in the early years of Henry III's reign that royal prerogative power in the matter of royal forests and Forest Law

was limited. royal forests, private forests and parks and areas of woodland scattered around the countryside to which the peasants may or may not have customary rights to certain uses and access were all put under pressure by the rising population. Evidence of this comes from the large number of court records in these years recording assarts (clearing of waste land, marshes or forests to allow farming) and purprestures (unauthorised enclosure of either common land, or in this case forests). Fines were often paid in these circumstances almost as a licence fee for the landlord accepting the change of use of the piece of land, rather than a straightforward penalty. Landholders themselves often carried out assarting as a way to increase their potential income. Sometimes this was on a large scale as was the case with the drainage of areas of the Somerset levels by the monks of Glastonbury Abbey. But smaller landholders also did it, although their opportunities to increase the area of cultivated land by clearing woodland or ploughing up pasture was often resisted by their existing tenants who would lose customary rights necessary to their own economic wellbeing when land use was changed in this way.

While the increase in population created pressure for the assarting of non-cultivated areas, it also led to some landlords increasing the number of tenancies they could offer by subdividing existing ones. However, like land clearance, this practice was restricted by concerns over unsought for consequences; in this case landholders were often concerned about the loss of traditional services by their tenants because the service would be subdivided in ratio with division of the tenancy. But there is plenty of evidence that by the thirteenth century, it was easier for many landlords to commute services for a money rent.[6] This was because the labour services were quite understandably resented by the peasants and provided grudgingly so that effectively they were more trouble for a landlord to collect than the results achieved by the work were worth. The increasing population lead to there being both more peasants whose landholdings was too small to feed themselves and their family, commonly known as cottars, and more landless labourers. These two groups provided both landlords and peasants with larger landholdings with a pool of labour actively seeking paid work. This work might be substituted for the labour services or used in large-scale landscape projects such as extensive assarting or building hunting parks.

In summary it seems too simplistic to suggest a clear causal link between the rapid rise in the population of medieval England in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to a general change in hunting methods in the period. Certainly in the case of the royal forests there is evidence from the records of Windsor forest that the prime argument that influenced the decisions of the royal forest

administrators when considering a proposed assart was whether the profit from the assart would be greater than any damage to the forest.[7] No doubt those kings with a keen interest in hunting would see this differently than those whose need for money outweighed other considerations. A clearer reason for bow and stable hunting being widely practised by more of the gentry and noble landholders in these centuries was the increased interest in owning parks. These, large as they were in relation to the landholding of the majority of the population living near to the parks, were rarely big enough to allow *par force* hunting.

But whatever sort of hunting men were going to enjoy they clearly had a keen interest in hunting dogs since three of the types of hound mentioned as necessary for par force hunting in the great medieval treatises appear in the court records of cases of illegal hunting outlined in the following chapter. These were greyhounds, running hounds and mastiffs. The men who told the court scribes the details in these cases, were royal foresters and huntsmen, could be expected to know the types of hound they saw in their forests. Being able to take the types of hound mentioned in the court records at face value provides some insights into the methods used by medieval poachers.

It is clear that by the thirteenth century the kings and nobles of England practised both forms of hunting, whereas the evidence of the earlier Norman and Angevin kings' hunting practices is less clear. There is some evidence that bow and stable hunting was the method most commonly employed in late Pre-Conquest England because of references to hedges or heys being used as traps.[8] The Normans seem to have continued the practice in the decades after the Conquest. William Twiti, huntsman to Edward II, wrote his 'Art of Hunting' in about 1327. While it was written in medieval French, a later Middle English translation goes as follows 'An other chace ther is whan a man hath set up acherys and greyhounds [*e de stabile*] and the best be founde and passe out of the boundys and myne houndes after.'[9] Twiti is clearly more interested in *par force* style hunting since he is making reference to using hounds to chase down the beasts which escape from bow and stable hunters. The bounds he mentions the beasts escaping from could be loose fences and hurdles laid out to channel the beasts towards the archers, or they could be nothing more fixed than 'drive' lines that the huntsmen have in mind as they moved the game towards the archers.

Gaston Phoebus writing in the late fourteenth century provides a brief description of bow and stable hunting which makes it clear that he practised bow and stable hunting quite often, although he viewed it as inferior to *par force* hunting. He comments that 'I know little of hunting with the bow, if you want to know more, you had best go to

England, where it is a way of life.'[10] The point Gaston Phoebus is making here is that, among the royal and noble hunters of continental Europe, par force hunting was the preferred and, in their estimation, most enjoyable and honourable form of hunting. He recognised the skill necessary to be successful in bow and stable hunting, and his comment that it was a way of life in England is in part a recognition that by the latter half of the fourteenth century, England (and he would no doubt have included Wales in England) was the home of more skilled archers (as opposed to crossbowmen) than any other country in Europe.

The basic practice in bow and stable hunting was to station the archers downwind of where the deer were likely to be hiding. The archers took their places at 'stands' among the trees, ideally in front of a tree which would disguise their presence somewhat to the oncoming deer. Also, standing at any position close to a tree would restrict the archers' freedom to draw the bow and aim at moving game. Some of the treatises, and one or two of the English court records of cases of illegal hunting, make mention of the archers wearing green to further camouflage them. In aristocratic bow and stable hunts the location of the deer would be discovered by the host's huntsmen either through their own skill or through the use of a brachet (a running hound hunting by scent). The huntsmen often took advantage of the observation that deer seemed to be less suspicious of a mounted man, which the deer was thought to have perceived as just another animal, than they were of men on foot, who they recognised as a threat. The stable, a line of unarmed men whose presence alone would tend to limit the opportunities for the deer to escape from the hunters' desired direction of movement were then placed. After this the huntsmen behind the deer started to move them gently towards the waiting archers. This was not a drive but more a gentle urging of the deer by two or three skilled men towards the waiting archers. The archers could either try to shoot the deer head on, preferably in the chest or try to shoot them in the side as they tried to turn from the archers or run through their line. The effectiveness of a head shot is evidenced from the finds from the manor of Faccombe Netherton in Hampshire recounted in contemporary evidence in chapter IX.

There are a number of medieval accounts which show that the archers faced the same dangers as modern game bird shooters can if someone concentrates more on their shot than the positions of their fellows. The earliest come from accounts of the events of 1100, the last year of William Rufus's reign. William's nephew Richard, son of his older brother, Robert Curthose,was killed when a knight shot an arrow (*sagitta*) at a beast but fatally wounded Richard instead. More famously William suffered a similar fate himself while hunting in the

New Forest. Odericus Vitalis writing between thirty and forty years after the event gave a thorough account including reports of bad omens before the king's death.[11] He writes that on the day he went hunting a smith came to the king and presented him with six arrows (*catapulta*). William kept four and gave two to Walter Tirel saying 'It is only right that the sharpest arrows should be given to the man who knows how to shoot the deadliest shots.' The king and his companions then took their places and awaited the game. An animal suddenly ran between them and 'The king drew back from his place and Walter loosed an arrow [*sagitta*]. It sped swiftly over the beast's back, grazing the hair and mortally wounded the king who was standing directly in its path.' If we want to be fairly certain about which type of bow William Rufus and his party were using on that fatal day then the problem with Odericus Vitalis account of the king's death is the inconsistency in the terms he used for the fatal missile. It may be that he reflected the usage of his time, and *catapulta* and *sagitta* were used as synonyms, certainly *catapulta* can mean either a cross bow bolt or an arrow, whereas sagitta always means an arrow. There is little evidence of regular use of crossbows at this early date in the history of Norman England. The Bayeux Tapestry, completed nearly twenty years before Rufus' death shows only hand bows in use, although they could not be called longbows. The argument that the king and his party were using hand bows of whatever length gains support from Goffrei Gaimer's *L'Estoire des Engleis*, written in Norman French about the same time or possibly slightly earlier than Odericus Vitalis.[12] He writes of the fatal shot that 'Walter Tirel dismounted very near the king, close to an elder, against an aspen he leaned. As the herd passed and the great hart came in the midst, he drew the bow which he held in his hand, a barbed arrow he shot…' There can be no doubt that this account is describing the use of a hand bow, and interestingly enough a very early mention of a barbed arrow as particularly suitable for hunting. This not the place to debate whether Rufus's death was by accident or design, the purpose of this account is to demonstrate that bow and stable hunting with hand bows was practised in England at this early date.

The main members of Henry I's Household were listed in the *Constitutio Domus Regis* which was written about 1136 as record of posts and their rates of reward at the end of his reign. The section covering huntsmen includes no doubt professional archers in the following terms: 'Each of the archers who carried the king's bow (*arcum regis*) 5*d* per day, and the other archers as much.'[13] The Latin word used for bow clearly shows that the king and his household hunted with hand bows.

Other accounts of the dangers of bow and stable hunting include the

record of an inquest held in Surrey in 1277. This tells that William and John, great friends who were members of Sir William Comyn's household, were hunting one day with their lord in his park at Fakenham. 'They took their places with the others to shoot the deer.' A deer came between William and John. William thought he had shot it but his arrow glanced off a branch and killed John by misadventure.[14] Gaston Phoebus mentions that Sir Geoffrey Harcourt was shot in the arm in these circumstances.

All the surviving accounts and records relating to hunting seem to be very precise in their use of words to describe the hunters' equipment; as a result we can be fairly certain that the hand bow (*arcus*) predominated in English hunting, and was frequently used in European bow and stable hunting.

Women could take part in either form of hunting, but were less likely to engage in the drawn out mounted pursuit of *par force* hunting than be involved in bow and stable hunting. Their involvement could be active, taking their place in the line of archers with a bow, or passive, sheltering in temporary stand to watch the archers shoot. This latter is particularly mentioned when the king or one of the great magnates was hunting.

Various methods were used to hunt small game whether birds or animals. These varied depending on the social class of the hunter, the legality of the hunting and the purpose of the hunt, in other words was it just for sport or to gain a necessary supplement to the diet. Birds of prey, specialised dogs such as types of terrier, bows and arrows, snares and nets were all used. Hunting small game required specialised arrowheads, most commonly blunt heads, the boults that appear in a number of records, and later crescent or forked heads. These latter will not appear in the discussion of arrows below because they tend to date to a later period than is under consideration here. Women seem to have been more regular participants in hunting small game than large. There are illustrations of them hawking and using bows and arrows against birds and rabbits. But the key point of this outline of hunting practice in medieval England is that through the primacy of bow and stable hunting it made a powerful contribution to the development of the English tradition of archery.

Notes

1 This summary description of *par force* hunting owes much to Cummins, J. (2003)
2 Mileson, S.A., *Parks in Medieval England* (Oxford University Press, 2009) p.32
3 Dyer, C. (2003) p.120
4 Dyer, C., *Standards of Living in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge University Press, 1989) p.4

5 Squires A.E. and Humphrey W., *The Medieval Park of Charnwood Forest* (Melton Mowbray, 1986) p.23
6 Dyer, C. (2003) p.134
7 Young, C.R. (1979) p.122
8 Mileson, S.A. (2009) p.31
9 Twiti, W., *La Venerie de Twiti* (G. Tilander, Cynegetica II, Uppsala 1956) p.47
10 Quoted in Cummins, J. (2003) p.53
11 Chibnall, M. (ed. and trans.), *The Ecclesiastical History of Odericus Vitalis* Vol.5 (Oxford, 1969–80) pp.280–91
12 Bell, A. (ed.), *Geffrei Gaimer, l'Estoire des Engleis* (Anglo Norman Text Society, 1960) lines 6,313–32
13 Johnson, C. (ed. and trans.), *Constutio Domus Regis in Dialogus de Scaccario* (Oxford University Press, 1983) p.135
14 *Calendar of Miscellaneous Inquests* Vol.1 p.594

VII

Hunting and Poaching

Hunting was the one of the great enthusiasms of the kings of England after the Conquest. Magnates, both lay and clerical, landholders with large landholdings also indulged within their own estates, but, as the outline of Forest Law makes clear, their right to hunt was always constrained by the interests of the king. As well as hunting in their own lands they also had the opportunity of being invited to hunt in the royal forests. But, the mass of the population of medieval England had very limited legal rights to hunting any sort of animal or bird for food or sport. This applied as much to the minority living in towns and cities as it did to the vast majority living in the countryside. But since when have legal restrictions stopped country people hunting small or large animals for food?

The chroniclers of Post-Conquest England recount several stories about the enthusiasm of William the Conqueror and his sons for hunting and their skill with the bow. One such tells of William running out of arrows while hunting and having to instruct a smith how to make arrowheads to his specification. There is also a story, reminiscent of Homer's 'The Odyssey', telling how no one else could draw the Conqueror's bow. This need not be taken literally; it is just a way of saying that William was a powerful archer. All three of his sons were enthusiastic hunting archers; William Rufus met his death while hunting with a bow. Wace recounts that Henry I broke his bow string while hunting and had to go to a peasant's hut for spare.[1] Another story that is difficult to take at face value since Henry would have been hunting in a royal forest, and the peasant would have been in grave danger of contravening Forest Law by having a bow string in his house. The real point of these stories is that the kings and princes of Norman England hunted with the bow, and so had a good understanding of the characteristics necessary in a bow for it to be effective.

There is plenty of evidence of the resentment generated by the

restrictions enforced through the Forest Law and the extent of the royal forests from Henry I's reign onwards which may explain why there is little evidence of legal hunting by people other than members, officers or employees of the royal household before Magna Carta and the associated Forest Charter. A possible reference may be found in a charter of Henry I granted to the Abbey of St Peter's in Gloucester. This gave the Abbey a tithe of all the venison taken within the 'province' of the Abbey, and was addressed to all foresters, hunters and bowmen 'in that part of Severn and Dene.'[2] It is not clear that all those addressed in the charter were royal officers. William FitzStephan in his late twelfth century 'Description of London' says that the citizens of London hawked and hunted with dogs, but he makes no mention of them using bows and arrows.[3]

However, people of all social groups hunted for food and sport throughout the Middle Ages, despite the legal restrictions. The higher classes often paid more rigorous financial penalties than the ordinary peasants and craftsmen when brought to the courts but they faced much less risk of imprisonment. Some poached with bows and arrows, having developed their archery skills for self-protection, or just as a social sport. People in medieval England had many holidays because of the number of religious festivals when work was prohibited. During the thirteenth century there were between forty and fifty religious holidays, in addition to Sundays when all work was forbidden.[4] On top of these there were other days when all work except ploughing was forbidden, and others when women had to stop their domestic work. Holidays were enforced through the church courts, but there is no doubt that men did not always observe them. While work was forbidden on these holidays, sports and games (within bounds) were not, and as has been previously noted, archery was one of the pastimes along with wrestling and rock throwing that men practised to develop and show off their physical prowess. The practice of archery skills came to have wider consequences in the thirteenth century as changes in the Assizes of Arms meant that archers became more important militarily. Some men whose work required archery skills, such as parkers or foresters, served in thirteenth-century armies. But these professional archers could not have provided even the limited numbers of military archers employed in the twelfth and first half of the thirteenth century, so other men must have developed archery skills at this time.

This chapter will be all about men practising archery illicitly to put food on their own and their friends' tables. Medieval Englishmen used various methods to poach game, including large game such as deer, but bows and arrows were not the most commonly used. Yet on at least one occasion a king of England considered archers to be the

major problem amongst the poachers preying on one of his forests. In 1276, no doubt as part of his efforts to re-establish law and order in his new kingdom, Edward I appointed Matthew de Columbar Justice to hold an inquisition into offences in the New Forest. He wrote to Matthew saying 'Because certain malefactor archers have recently entered and carried off beasts from the New Forest against the peace and without the permission of Queen Eleanor, we have appointed you to inquire into the matter by the oath of the good and loyal men.'[5] The foresters put considerable efforts into preventing poaching, patrolling the forests to try to catch 'malefactors', and no doubt to give potential poachers pause for thought about the likelihood of being identified while in the forest. Just being seen in a royal forest was enough to make you a suspicious person. From the regular complaints of foresters behaving oppressively, it seems clear that they enquired and searched wherever they believed they might find evidence. As will become apparent below, the local communities could prove very reluctant to bear witness in support of the forest officials when a case came to court. In the thirteenth century accusations of infringing Forest Law were heard by the Justices of the Forest Eyre. Since the Eyres were held both irregularly and increasingly infrequently, men often waited years before knowing the verdict. Usually those awaiting the Eyre were free, with neighbours or local men of standing being sworn to bring the accused before the Justices when they arrived. As a result, court rolls record many cases were the accused is not presented at court, or has died in the interim.

Poaching by Peasants

At the beginning of the fourteenth century between 80 and 85 per cent of the population of Medieval England lived in the countryside. The majority of these were peasants whose landholdings ranged from those holding 60 or more acres who would have had a very good standard of living to those with very small landholdings who had to find labouring work to survive. The majority of these peasants would be serfs, legally tied to a particular lord's landholding, but there were substantial numbers of free peasants in parts of the country. Both groups of peasants, serfs and free, would include people with differing size landholdings, although freemen tended to have larger holdings on average.

The earliest surviving accounts of peasants poaching are found in the records of Eyre of Northamptonshire made in 1209. The actual date of the offences is not recorded but they could have happened at any time in the previous decade. Two brothers, Richard and Peter Gerewold, were seen in an enclosure in the forest with bows and

arrows. They had no chattels that could be seized so the sheriff was instructed to bring them to the next Assize, with the threat that they would be outlawed for non-attendance. At the same Eyre, Ralph the son of Simon of Newland in Worcestershire didn't turn up to answer for being caught in the forest with a bow (*arcus*) with a string, a barbed arrow and a bolt (*bulsone*).[6] This case is interesting because of the mention of the bowstring, to prove that threat was real, and the mention of two types of arrow, a barbed hunting arrow and a blunt bolt, that would have been used against small game and birds. Barbed heads are specifically mentioned in court records of the first half of the thirteenth century for two reasons. Firstly, the forest officers would have felt that there could be no doubt about the intentions of a man carrying a barbed arrow. Secondly, as noted in chapter IX, the archaeological record suggests that the use of true barbed heads was becoming more widespread at this time, so the court records were being precise recording this novelty. In another case, Geoffrey, son of Stephen Swift seems to have been very determined to hunt successfully, since, when he was caught in the king's enclosure at Weybridge, he was carrying a bow and five barbed arrows. This was the lesser of Geoffrey's offences, since he also admitted to taking two fawns on another occasion. He was outlawed for non-attendance before the Justices rather than his offences.[7]

Men living in the royal forests could have bows and arrows in their houses if they had permission from the Justices of the Forest Eyre. Three more cases from these Eyres show men being charged with possession of unlicensed bows in the forests. In one a man was taken in the forest with just a bow and string, in another a man had both a bow and a crossbow, while the third just mentions the man had a bow. Although arrows don't seem to have been discovered in any of these cases the men were fined.[8] These Eyres were held at the time that King John was trying to raise as much money as possible through the enforcement of Forest Law. Another sign of this determination to enforce Forest Law can be found in the general accusation that the inhabitants of Silberton took deer and wild beasts. Another township, Newton, was in trouble because the community had promised to deliver Thomas Gelee, the reaper, to the Eyre and failed. Thomas was accused of having shot a buck in Nossington wood.[9]

In the late 1230s, Gilbert Dun, the forester of Hainault Forest, was riding in the forest with his servant, when they saw eight men armed with bows and arrows. They challenged them but the men escaped into the forest.[10] Gilbert may well have been relieved to have got away with challenging such a group, and not pressed his pursuit too closely.

Around the same time, the Parker of Woodham (modern W. Ferrers,

Essex) saw men carrying bows and arrows in the park. He called for help and surrounded the park, whereupon sixteen men with bows and arrows and 'the venison of four beasts' came out and crossed into the neighbouring park of the Bishop of Ely at Rettendon. They were now outside his jurisdiction so he raised the Hue and Cry against them. Some were found and identified, but they had no goods and chattels with the bounds of the forest of Essex by which they could be attached to appear before the Justices.[11] This does not necessarily mean that they were poor; they may have come some distance to poach. But this case demonstrates the problems foresters and parkers could have protecting their forests because their powers in law were limited to the geographic boundaries of their forest or park.

A little later in 1239 there is a case from the records of the Essex Eyre, that shows that common men could mount well prepared poaching expeditions. John, the son of the Woodward of Chigwell was going through Hainault Forest, when he saw seven men, five with bows and arrows, and two with four greyhounds. Three of the greyhounds were masked, this may have been something like blinkers to stop poorly trained hounds being distracted while on the chase, or it may have been disguise to cover distinguishing marks. John hurried to tell his father that he recognised one of the men as John le Blund of Edmonton who 'he often saw … coming to see his pigs which he had in the wood aforesaid for pannage.'[12] Either John le Blund was careless, poaching in woods where he was well known, or he used his pigs as cover to check out the woods for venison, and to gain an idea of how assiduously the foresters patrolled.

In the 1251 three men from Corby were suspected of poaching in the royal forest of Rockingham in Northamptonshire. When the forest officers searched their houses they found thirteen Welsh (*wallenses*) arrows, but no bow in Robert of Corby's house. But in Geoffrey Gos of Corby's house they found pieces of venison, a bow with a string, seven barbed arrows and a small arrow with five fletches.[13] These men were well equipped for poaching, Robert may well have hidden his bow, but he was very careless about his arrows. The range of types of arrow is interesting. The most unusual being the small arrow with five fletches, possibly similar to a modern 'flu flu' and used for shooting at small birds or squirrels up in trees.

One day in 1253 William of Rode, the walking forester of the park near Brigstock, met Geoffrey Catel and Peter Welp coming into town. Geoffrey was carrying a doe which had an arrow wound in the middle of its head. He tried to talk his way out of the situation by claiming that he had found the doe already dead, and that he was carrying it into Brigstock at the behest of the other foresters. William, quite sensibly, didn't believe him.

In the following year six men from the Hanborough area of Oxfordshire, led by Nicholas de Brohedis entered the royal park at Woodstock armed with bows and arrows. Clearly they were not disturbed because they managed to take seven bucks and five does. Nicholas and his associate Hubert, a clerk who was the son of the parson of Hanborough, were outlawed for non-attendance before the Justices. Around the same time, Hugh Brun of Hanborough, who may have been involved in the Woodstock poaching, was caught with a bow and arrows in the covert of Wychwood Forest by the foresters. They declared that he was a 'known wrongdoer to the venison' and he was imprisoned.[14]

In 1256 Robert of Helperthorpe, Thomas, son of Simon le Beriere and William, Roger Hutred's shepherd were accused by the Foresters and Verderers of going into the forest of Scalleby in the North of England equipped with bows, arrows and greyhounds 'for the purpose of hunting and taking venison for about six days.'[15] Roger Hutred's house was their base for doing this. It is difficult to guess if Roger Hutred was aware of the men's poaching. They were based in his house and William was his shepherd, but Roger was not accused of anything. Since the forest officials or their men saw Robert, Thomas and William poaching, not surprisingly since they were at it for six days, it may be that the men took advantage of a sustained absence by Roger. The same set of court records included four other poaching cases where bows and arrows were not used which may give some idea of the currency of bows and arrows at the time.

Many cases show that the reputation of a man caught infringing Forest Law was important in deciding his fate. Many times a man is labelled a common malefactor or frequent offender against the king's venison. This shows that he had local reputation as a poacher but, that until the case in hand no one had had the necessary evidence to bring him before the Justices. Other cases show the contrary, a man's good reputation was enough to earn him a pardon. Two from the first decade of the thirteenth century demonstrate this. In the first Walter Share, the huntsman of Roger of Raveningham, was found in the forest with bows and arrows. He was pardoned because the verderers of the forest swore that he was not there 'for the purpose of evil doing.'[16] It is reasonable to assume that Walter was well known to the verderers because of his occupation. Geoffrey son of Alan of Sibthorpe committed the same offence but was acquitted on the oath of the foresters, the verderers and the town, clearly a man of considerable influence.[17] In the middle of the century there is a third example of man caught in the forest with a bow and arrows being cleared because he could find people to swear that he was not a 'malefactor against the venison'.[18]

Although forest justice could take years to catch up with offenders it was implacable. In the court hearings held in 1257, John son of Edonis of Lyndhurst and Simon le Theyn were accused of entering the New Forest with a crossbow and a bow and arrows 'with the intention of harming the venison' ten years earlier. They seem to have been general criminals since they were hanged for theft at these hearings. They may well have poached and thieved from serious need since Edonis was not fined for harbouring them because he was too poor.[19]

Sometimes fairly general accusations of wrongdoing by peasants in the forest were made. The Forest of Dean seems to have been plagued by groups of poaching peasants since in the 1260s a group described as 'common malefactors with bows and arrows, snares and other engines' was active in the forest. A similar complaint was made in the following decade, when another group used 'bows and arrows and other engines'.[20] These complaints were not detailed enough in themselves to enable the forest officers to bring men before the Justices, but they reflect a concern about the efficacy of the forest administration, and should be viewed as a request for some sort of action by the royal administration to protect its rights in the forest.

In 1267 four men belonging to the area of Knighton and Alcester were described as 'common offenders against the king's venison with bows and dogs' in Feckenham Forest. The mother of one of them was also involved since she was recorded as habitually receiving them at her house.[21]

Two more cases of poaching in Exmoor Forest in the same year show very clearly that men poached for the table. William de Reygny of la Hele, his son, John, and several unknown men went into the forest equipped with bows and arrows. They shot a hind and took it back to their homes. John seems to have been a regular offender since he is named in a second case but there is no mention of bows and arrows this time. In another case in the same year Thomas le Shetere and William Wyme of Bremley in Molland also went into the forest carrying bows and arrows where they shot a hind which they took home.[22] The latter two were known to be habitual offenders against the venison. Interestingly John the Chaplain of Hawkridge is mentioned as giving them shelter and 'consented to their poaching'. Another cleric who had little respect for the king's deer!

Two years later in the same forest one of the reasons why men sometimes seemed confident about taking the king's deer became clear. Ruchebeer of Cridland and several unknown men spent three days in the forest equipped with bows and arrows. William de Plesset, the Forester in Fee, was in trouble because he did nothing to take Ruchebeer and his friends, neither raising the Hue and Cry nor summoning his foresters.[23] There is no suggestion in the court record

that William was a confederate of the poachers just that he was either lazy or incompetent.

In 1271, Richard, son of Alexander de la Sale, John, son of Thomas Schorlemoyne, Henry, son of William son of Robert, John of Rudemareleye and William of Batekote went into Feckenham Forest with bows and arrows and a black dog. They shot a hart, and followed it through the middle of the village of Broughton with the help of their black dog. They showed their contempt for the forest court with their casual remark that 'they do not know if they took it or not'.[24] The men's declared uncertainty as to whether they took the doe or not and the seeming length of the pursuit suggests that they were probably using a relatively weak bow or relatively small arrowheads, assuming it wasn't just a poor shot. Evidence of the type of arrowheads which common men may have used for hunting can be found below. However, in a separate offence Richard the parson of Grafton Flyford and Richard the vicar of Crowle received them with whatever venison Richard son of Alexander de la Sale could procure. It seems that Richard was a persistent poacher, who kept in with the local churchmen by providing them with venison. These incidents suggest that Richard and the others were ordinary people who had no respect for the royal forest, and that there community agreed with them since the villagers seemed unconcerned about the pursuit of the deer through the village. It was the norm for hunters using bows and arrows to be prepared to follow wounded deer, indeed Gaston Phoebus' *Livre de Chasse* written about 100 years later, gives detailed advice about how the seriousness of the wound can be adjudged from the colour and state of the blood trail.[25]

Six years later John of Rudemarleye was caught poaching again. This time a man called Eustace de Hacce seems to have been the leader of a group of five man including John who went into Feckenham Forest with a bercelet and bows and arrows.[26] A bercelet is a shooter's dog, used to drive the game out of cover and possibly retrieve it. They could be as substantial as mastiffs, so if used by archers hunting deer, could be capable of bringing down wounded game.[27] Whatever the size of their bercelet, they were successful, shooting a buck and taking the meat back to Eustace's house.

One thing that quickly becomes apparent in an account of hunting in medieval England is frequency of disputes arising over the boundaries of royal forests and extent of the jurisdiction of Forest Law, particularly when other men had parks or chases within the forest bounds. This was a long-standing grievance addressed by the Forest Charter. royal foresters and the Justices of the Forest Eyre tended to make wide estimations of reach of Forest Law. In 1275 the King's huntsmen were hunting within the forest of Kinver, when their

dogs put up a stag, which ran into the park of Brewood. John de la Wytemore was in the park and he shot the stag, which ran on into the fish pond of the nuns of Brewode. John followed the stag and dragged its dead body out of the fish pond. John Giggard then came up and claimed the stag on the grounds that he pursued it (was he one of the king's huntsmen?). He skinned and butchered it, keeping half the venison and giving the other half to the nuns. Although the stag was taken outside the royal forest, because the king's dogs had put it up, it was royal game. The nuns were pardoned their offence of receiving illicit venison 'for the good of the king's soul', but both Johns were fined.[28]

A clear example of two common men poaching to augment their own and their friends' diets comes from the records of the Forest Eyre held in the New Forest in 1276. John le Lust and John le Hayer were accused of going into the forest with bows, arrows and a white hunting dog. They killed a deer and took it back to a friend's house to butcher. Four years later both Johns were described as habitual poachers with bows and arrows. John le Hayer was prepared to use violence against the foresters whereas although John le Lust was mentioned as being part of group of seven offenders in a plea of 1280, there is no record of him or his companions offering violence to the foresters.[29] The case of the two Johns, like many others in this chapter, shows how men could continue as habitual poachers despite being caught and becoming notorious in the thirteenth century. They could do this because Magna Carta and the Forest Charter reduced the penalties that a poacher might suffer by forbidding maiming as a penalty for poaching. As a result those men whose chosen weapon against the king's venison was the bow, were able to develop their archery skills in repeated illegal hunts. Magna Carta also had a clause which limited amercements (fines of an arbitrary amount) in two ways. Firstly there was a general statement that the level of amercement should fit the level of the offence, and secondly that it should not be set at such a high level that it destroyed a man's livelihood.[30] This applied to both free men and serfs. It is important in the context of illegal hunting because it allows conclusions as to the offenders' financial status to be drawn from the level of amercement demanded by the courts.

There are a few cases in the court records for the 1270s from the New Forest where the circumstances and the level of fine levied suggest that the malefactors were just common men poaching to supplement their diets. In 1273 two foresters caught three men in the forest with bows and arrows. There's no mention of them having actually taken game, so their offences may have been merely carrying unlicensed bows in the forest. This might be why their fines were

relatively low at 1 mark (6/8*d*) and half a mark (3/4*d*), but it is more likely that the level of the fine reflected their limited resources. The same practice can be found in court records of 1277. In one, three unidentified men with bows and arrows took a doe and were harboured by Richard, a smith. He was fined half a mark for his offence, not a great amount but a stiff penalty for an ordinary craftsman no doubt. In another case, seven identified men who were described as habitual offenders took two deer with bows and arrows. Given their reputation, this may have been regarded as a more serious offence, since the man who harboured them and their venison was fined £1. It is likely that both harbourers were paid in venison for their help. Finally, in the following year three named men with bows and arrows and a small dog took a buck and a pricket (a young stag). The foresters caught one of them with venison but he was fined only half a mark, another low fine given the scale of the offence.[31]

In 1278 John de la Teylerye of Bardesley and John, son of William Stodhwde were shooting at the king's deer in Feckenham Forest when Peter de Bologne, the riding forester came upon them. He attached them and bailed them to appear at the court.[32] It is likely that Peter was accompanied by a small number of less important men but even so the two Johns seem to have been particularly compliant.

Another type of boundary problem afflicted the Foresters of the royal forest of Macclesfield. Not only did they have to keep an eye on their fellow Cheshiremen, but because the forest boundary and the county boundary with Staffordshire were the same for some distance, they had to contend with cross border poaching. They faced this problem because their powers were limited not only to the forest but also to the county of Cheshire. They needed support from the Sheriff of Staffordshire to have any success against the men of the county who poached in their forest. One instance of the 'Staffordshire problem' took place in August 1281. Five men from Staffordshire came into the forest with bows and greyhounds. They shot a doe, but the foresters recovered it, seized a bow and one of the dogs, and chased the poachers back into Staffordshire. It seems that this was not their first encounter with the Macclesfield foresters since they were described as 'common malefactors' in the court record. The Eyre Rolls of Chester for 1285 and 1286 record two other cases of questionable hunting with bows. In the first, Robert Bateman was acquitted of shooting a hind in the forest, but in the second seven men equipped with bows and greyhounds were fined for taking a hind.[33]

The records of the Forest Eyre of the Forest of Lancaster held in 1287 provide an interesting summary of the misdeeds committed in the forest in the previous few years. The context of this Eyre was that it was held when Edward I was at the height of his powers, albeit

somewhat distracted by his Welsh campaigns. The reputation, effectiveness and ability of the king seem to have provided no protection for his wide-reaching royal forests. One particularly significant case of questionable hunting involved Nicholas of Lee and six other named men who were accused of having caught stags with greyhounds and bows and arrows. This was no stealthy enterprise, but, given the number of men involved and their equipment almost sounds like a prepared bow and stable type hunt. Nicholas and one of the other men were imprisoned, and then ransomed; Nicholas for the relatively low sum of 1 mark, despite having been caught red handed outside the king's enclosure with male and female deer. Nicholas claimed that knights, thegns and free tenants had the right to take game (he being a free tenant by implication). This was accepted, but unfortunately Nicholas and his friends had been too enthusiastic in their hunting because they had taken both bucks and does, that is fallow deer which they were allowed, and stags and hinds, red deer, which they most definitely were not.[34] Red deer were always reserved to the king. This case is significant because it records the right of some ordinary free men to limited hunting within the bounds of a royal forest. No account of the origin of this right is offered in the court record but it was accepted as a valid defence.

In the last decade of the thirteenth century cases of poaching with bows and arrows were recorded in the forest of Quernmore and Wyresdale which involved habitual poachers. In one, Thomas, son of Adam of Berewik wounded a buck (male fallow deer) in the town of Lancaster. He was described as one who 'commonly goes with bow and arrow to shoot the deer'. He escaped justice by being in the service of magnates outside the county. Given his record, he might well have been in service as an archer, either military in Edward I's wars or as a huntsman in a noble household. In the second, William the son of Robert the smith of Wyresdale was found in Quernmore Forest with a bow and arrow. He was imprisoned because he was a common malefactor.[35] Smiths often worked in or near woodland to have a ready supply of charcoal, so William may have developed a knowledge of the forest and the beasts living in it from childhood.

Occasionally there was a case which suggests that a peasant poacher could either be very desperate to take venison, or very confident of escape. In August 1295 Edward I was hunting in Peak Forest. It is quite possible that he was par force hunting since the court record of the incident states that his hounds had brought a stag to bay outside the bounds of the forest. William, son of Rankill of Hucklow, came up and shot the stag and killed the king's hounds. At this point the king's huntsmen came up and challenged William who fled, so that the huntsmen were able to recover the venison for the king's larder.[36]

Since William had his bow to hand, it is likely that he was either shadowing the royal hunt in the hope of finding easy prey among wounded or exhausted deer escaping the royal hunters, or just came across the stag while out poaching. Whatever the circumstances, he was particularly brazen.

All forests attracted poachers and fourteenth-century records tell something of their activities in the forest of Lancaster. In 1302 Henry the parker of Quernmore swore that as he looked through the palings in Quernmore Forest (a boundary fence separating the park from the main forest), he saw two local men, Richard of Thirnum and Richard Cokker, kill a hind prepare to carry it off. Henry shot arrows at them, so they fled leaving their prey behind. The foresters were ordered to arrest the two men and imprison them at Lancaster. But the foresters seem to have been unsuccessful or lax since in the following year Richard of Thirnum was caught in Quernmore Forest with another man, both of them carrying bows and arrows, accompanied by two shepherds carrying staffs. This time Richard was imprisoned, as were his associates. Their fate had seems to have had little deterrent effect locally since three years later six men were reported in Wyresdale forest with bows, arrows and greyhounds, and they caught a hind.[37]

In 1323 in the same forest, William, son of Peter Wiles with a few companions killed a hart using bows and arrows and 'a great grey dog'. Two years later, two brothers used a mastiff and bows and arrows in a similar offence. Hints of the status of these perpetrators comes from the description of the dogs they used, a non-descript big dog and a mastiff, and the level of fines they paid, in William's case only 6/8*d*, while the brothers paid 30/- between them.[38] No doubt the fines were uncomfortable for the men, but courts had no interest in setting fines that could not be paid since the administration of justice was an important income raising activity for the Crown. The dogs involved sound more like general guard dogs. Mastiffs were used in noble hunting, usually to pull down wounded or exhausted deer, but they were not high-status hunting dogs.

The records of the Eyres for the forest of Pickering held in the fourteenth century highlight all the problems that could beset forests. Besides general poaching, the foresters had to cope with the activities of both a noble household and a major clerical household and the grievances that arose when privately held forests were within the bounds of a royal forest or abutting them. In 1312 John son of Abbas of Rosedale was hunting with a bow and arrow in the forest of the Abbot of Whitby; there is no mention of whether he was there legally or not because that was not the concern of the Forest Justices who, as the rest of the account shows, were only interested only in offences against Forest Law. John wounded a hart in the Abbot's forest but

then ‘contrary to the Assize of the Forest’ followed it into the royal forest of Pickering carrying his bow and arrow. The bailiff of Pickering took the wounded deer with his hounds. So far John’s offence is only carrying an unlicensed bow and arrows in a royal forest. But it was also recorded that John slew one hart and wounded another later in the same year, and was identified as hunting illegally with a bow and arrows on another occasion around this time. It seems safe to assume that John was not hunting with permission in the Abbot’s forest, and that poaching was a major occupation for him. The second case occurred in 1336 after the Eyre had started. Three men with hounds, bows and arrows took a hart on the boundary between the Abbot’s forest and the forest of Pickering. Not apparently an offence because they were reported as not being clearly within the bounds of the royal forest. However, this is a case where the defendants’ reputation was all important. Since they had been previously convicted of poaching they were figures of suspicion in the estimation of the foresters and the Forest Justices. As a result they were fined and bailed for their behaviour on this occasion.[39]

Poachers using bows and arrows were particularly active in this forest the 1330s when on a number of occasions groups of common men, not all of whom the foresters were able to identify, were observed hunting with varying success in the forest. Simon son of Robert Wood was involved on all three occasions, Robert Close on two, but the court record makes no suggestion that they were in an organized gang. It seems that these were groups of local men, on one occasion a cobbler is identified as taking part, led by ‘habitual malefactors’ such as Simon and Robert.[40] The difficulties of successfully poaching deer with bows and arrows were highlighted in several cases, particularly when the poacher was working on his own. Two examples happened in 1331–2. In one Thomas, son of William Rusto shot a hind but lost it before it dropped from the wound because ‘the wood was too thick’. In the second William Morison just seemed to lose his wounded prey. Four years later John Scot went into the forest with a bow and arrows. He noticed that the foresters were watching him and escaped before they could arrest him. This narrow escape did not put him off poaching because a little later in the same year he shot a hind but was unable to find it.

The forest pleas of the New Forest heard in 1333 include one of the more extreme cases of delay in dealing with offences against Forest Law. Henry of Lym was fined 20/- for entering the forest with others carrying bows and arrows and shooting at the king’s deer. They did this in 1289, and not surprisingly, Henry, who must have been in his sixties when justice caught up with him since there is no mention of him being a boy at the time of the offence, was the only one of the

offenders still alive.

This same series of pleas includes two more cases of poachers successfully using bows and arrows twenty years before being brought before the Justices.[41] In one, Gillian, daughter of Roger le Dunt, was fined only 12*d* for harbouring four named poachers who took five deer using bows and arrows, a surprisingly low fine given the success of the poachers. This probably reflects her poverty and age. The second was an example of opportunism by common men when it came to taking venison. John the Soper (who had travelled to the New Forest from the Isle of Wight) and John the Baker were caught by a forester carrying off a deer that had been shot with a barbed arrow.[42] The two Johns were not carrying bows and seem to have just taken advantage of some hunters, quite likely poachers not finding the game they had shot.

Another example of how enforcement of Forest Law became less rigorous in the fourteenth century comes from the Nottinghamshire Eyre of 1334. The foresters were no less diligent in their efforts to protect the venison, but the royal administration seemed less interested in appointing Forest Justices to hear cases and levy penalties. The crime itself occurred something like a decade before the hearing. Hugh of Wotehale near Woodborough, William Hyend, Wilcock, the ex-servant of the parson of Clifton and Stephen Fleming of Nottingham shot a hart in the wood of Arnold near Throwys. However, they either lost the trail of the wounded beast or abandoned it for fear of detection, since it was found dead and putrid with the arrow still in it. When the Justices of the Eyre finally dealt with the case Stephen had died and William and Wilcock were outlawed for not appearing, circumstances that were not uncommon given the delay between committing the offence and the Eyre. The last member of the group, Hugh was pardoned because he was poor.[43]

This case provides more evidence that the owner of an arrow could be identified from the arrow itself. Of course it may be that rumours of the expedition came to ears of the forest officers and they were able to ‘persuade’ someone to give them information. While archers may have put some sort of owner’s mark on their arrows to enable recovery of the arrow in sporting or leisure shooting, this would seem unwise if going poaching. Much more likely is that common men made their own arrows at this time, so that the arrows would have been much more individual than would have been the case later in the fourteenth century and in the fifteenth century, when craftsmen fletchers were more numerous.

Middling Orders

Throughout this book the middle orders of society in medieval England are thought of as those who have surplus income to spend on horses, dogs and good bows. They may hold some local office but will certainly be of some standing in their county. Their landholdings will be big enough to provide a surplus to support their household. They may be knights or lords of a manor, but the records don't always make this clear. Sometimes the groups of poachers that included men from these middling layers of society were large, and many seem to have been well organised. They often seem more like a group of men going for a day's hunting rather than a group engaged in some stealthier poaching.

Sometimes the foresters seemed to only catch up with part of a poaching gang. One such case happened in the first decade of the thirteenth century when foresters took a greyhound that was chasing beasts in the forest. Shortly afterwards they also took a boy with a horn and seven arrows. They believed that the boy was an attendant supporting a group of men who evaded notice. There is a similar case from around the same time when three unknown malefactors came to Sapley with bows arrows and two greyhounds. They set the hounds to chase the game, but clearly fled the foresters who came up and caught the greyhounds. There is no mention of anyone identifying the greyhound in the subsequent enquiries in either case.[44] In a final example of 'middle class' poaching in King John's reign, Gervaise, 'the man' of John of Crackehall was seen in the forest at night with greyhounds, bows and arrows 'for the purpose of evil doing with other unknown evil doers.'[45] In another case in Northamptonshire thirty years later, a group of foresters met a youth (*garcioni*), Roger son of Lawrence of Wadehoe in the forest of Lochlawe. Since he was carrying a bow, some barbed arrows and a welsh arrow he was taken and imprisoned.[46] In this case and the previous one, the offender was a servant of a household but had good equipment such as greyhounds and barbed arrows which suggests at the very least that they were using resources from the household rather than their own personal equipment.

At sometime in the late 1230s, the forester of Kingswood saw sixteen men on foot and two on horseback, carrying bows and arrows in the forest. He raised the Hue and Cry on them, rather foolishly it seems since help was not immediately to hand. They assaulted him and took his horn and sword off him and then went away. The forester, accompanied by the men of the neighbourhood and the verderers, pursued them unsuccessfully.[47] In this case, unlike some of the cases where poachers threatened the foresters by shooting at them, the poachers seemed reluctant to do any serious harm to the forester.

In 1250–1 in Northamptonshire, the riding foresters saw a man on

horseback Roger Russell of Ashwell, followed by a page (*garcioni*), William son of Osbert of Silverstone, who was carrying a bow and arrows. They hailed him, and captured him despite his attempted flight. The report continues 'his bow of yew and three barbed arrows and three unbarbed [*genderese*] arrows' were taken as evidence.[48] The yew bow was clearly out of the ordinary since it caught the eye of both the foresters and the scribe making the records of this Northamptonshire Eyre. Records of this particular Eyre were very precise, since in the record of another case about poaching Rockingham Forest noted above, also included a detailed report of the equipment found in poachers' houses, specifying different types of arrow. But the Rockingham record made no mention of the bow wood used to make the bow found in a poacher's house. This suggests that Roger Russell was a man with sufficient enthusiasm for archery, discernment and spare money to have acquired a better than normal quality bow.

In some other cases too, the equipment reportedly carried by poachers implies that their income was such that they came from the middling orders. In 1257 two men were accused of having entered the New Forest with a crossbow and a bow and arrows with 'the intention of harming the venison'. Nothing is recorded of their status since by the time the offence came to court, one had died and the other, who came from a neighbouring county anyway, was outlawed for non appearance. In a second case in the same forest, John de la Wodefaud and his two servants were taken with greyhounds, bows and arrows and a crossbow.[49] Two things suggest that the men involved in both these cases had a relatively high level of disposable income to use to indulge their enthusiasm for the hunt. Firstly, the relative cost of a crossbow compared with that of a handbow of whatever length or quality was high, as is noted in chapter VIII. Secondly, the specific mention of greyhounds being used rather than a more anonymous hunting dogs or hounds as can be found in other cases

In 1262 Vitalis de Tonewerthe, Thomas of Prestbote, who was squire to the parson of Alvechurch and others unknown went into Feckenham Forest well prepared for poaching with bows arrows and greyhounds. However, the patrolling Foresters came upon them, and hailed them whereupon they fled and managed to escape because of the density of the forest.[50]

In the same year Robert Hasteng accompanied by his squire, his servant, his clerk, Adam le Parker, Benedict le Curly and six others including a father and son, went poaching with bows and arrows in Kinver Forest. They were successful, shooting five stags and three hinds which they took back to Robert's house at 'Chebbesey'. Robert Hasteng 'and many others of his household and maintenance' carried

out another poaching expedition in the same forest a little later in the same year, again apparently equipped only with bows and arrows, and took another three bucks and a doe.[51] Robert Hasteng and his household seem to have been more skilful archers than some of the other gangs and groups of poachers given the number of beasts they shot, particularly since there is no mention of them being aided by dogs. This fact, and the number of deer they took, shows that Robert and his companions were confident in their archery skills. There is no mention of them using barbed arrows.

In the following year the men of the household of Ralph Bassett of Drayton Bassett seem to have been left at a loose end by the death of their master. As will be made clear below, Ralph Bassett had previously encouraged other men to hunt in Cannock Forest which was adjacent to his landholding. After Ralph's death his household, led by Henry Dymmok, based themselves at John of Alvechurch's house and regularly entered Feckenham Forest. The court record suggests that they were very well prepared since their hounds are described as both running dogs and greyhounds, animals trained and bred to different roles in the medieval hunt. They were successful, being accused of taking many deer and bringing the venison back to John's house. Henry was imprisoned for his enterprise.[52]

In 1267 Geoffrey de Lacy, William of London, his steward, Reginald of Immewerthe, Lord of Dormaston and others armed with bows and arrows took an unknown number of deer. The details are vague 'due to the large number of wrongdoers neither the foresters nor any others dared approach them while they were in the forest.'[53] Because the record was so vague it cannot be taken as evidence of the gentry practising archery, but, given the common practice of bow and stable hunting in England, there is no reason to think that Geoffrey and Reginald just directed the hunt.

Thomas of Cirencester was another landholder of middling status who personally led poaching expeditions by his household and friends so enthusiastically that in 1268 he was declared 'a common offender against the king's venison with bows and arrows'.[54]

In the same year, Alexander Dauseville, Thomas and William his squires, Andrew his huntsman and Haykin the earstwhile Woodward of his wood at Pudlicote were accused of being habitual evildoers to the venison of Wychwood, using dogs, greyhounds, bows and arrows. Three other men including Haykin's son were accused of helping them.[55] While there is no mention of the number of deer they took, this seems to have been a serious case. Alexander and four others were imprisoned until they could pay appropriate fines.

In 1271 a local knight, Walter de Belle Campo, accompanied by his squire, Henry of Wysham, two grooms and others of his household

went hunting in Feckenham Forest. They had bows, arrows and three greyhounds, so this may be another example of bow and stable hunting. Whatever their methods they were successful since they killed a doe and took the venison back to Walter's house.[56] In the following year, another knight William de Boterell with two companions entered the same forest with bows arrows and hounds.[57]

The Forest Laws could hit knights just as hard as they would lower social groups. In 1272 Ralph le Wasteneys of Tykeshale and Philip de Barynton, lord of Creighton, went hunting with bows, arrows and greyhounds in the forest of Kinver. There is no mention of them having any companions, so this seems to have been a couple of friends out for some sport. They were successful and took two hinds. When their case came before the Justices, neither of them appeared before the court so the Sheriff was ordered to arrest Ralph and take Philip's lands and holdings into the King's hands. This left Philip with no income and quite possibly nowhere to live, in apparent contradiction of the clause in Magna Carta forbidding the seizing of a man's livelihood. Both men subsequently paid fines of 40/- for their offence and were reinstated.[58]

In 1272 a group of Staffordshire men made at least two poaching expeditions into Kinver Forest. In the first case William de Wrottesleye and his associates used greyhounds to chase game out of the forest. This may mean that they got a mixed group of deer out of the forest, either red or fallow deer which counted as venison, and roe deer which did not. It was their offence against the venison that particularly concerned the Justices of the Forest Eyre. In the second offence William, his brother Hugh, Nicholas de la Lude and his brother Thomas, and William, son of Alice of Penne used only bows and arrows to take a stag (if the court record is precise then this would been a mature red deer)[59] and then they divided the venison between them. William, who seems to have been the leader, had sufficient status in the community despite these offences to stand surety for his brother Hugh when he was fined for his part in these activities. But this group included men of varying financial and social status who hunted together for food. One of them, William, son of Alice, was pardoned by the court because of his great poverty.[60]

William le Poer was one of those men who seemed to have been almost immune to the Forest Law in that they and their associates hunted regularly in the royal forests. Sometimes this immunity arose from poachers working in gangs either numerous enough or sufficiently well armed that the foresters couldn't deal with them, in other cases it may have been a matter of local influence over court procedures. He hunted regularly in Feckenham Forest. In May 1268, William, his brother Roger and others unnamed went into the forest

with bows, arrows, running dogs and greyhounds and hunted for three days running, killing a number of deer. In December in the same year William and Roger were back in the forest, accompanied by Walter Hacket of Croule and others for another two days' hunting. They had the same high level of equipment. In July 1270, William and Roger were back in the forest for an unknown number of days, accompanied this time by their brother John and Robert de Brase among others. Again they were well equipped with both running dogs and greyhounds as well as bows and arrows. Robert de Brase (also spelt de Bracy), was part of a family who were as persistent in their poaching as was their colleague William le Poer. In 1270 Robert, his brother Walter and others used William le Poer's dogs to hunt, although there is no mention of bows and arrows in this case, and were 'received' at William de Bracy's house. There is no clear reference to the relationship between Robert and William de Bracy. In the same year William de Bracy also received Henry of Riptard who with various others had been hunting in the forest with bows, arrows, running dogs and greyhounds.[61] Maybe William and his friends were just taking advantage of Henry III's relatively weak hold on justice in his old age.

Poaching gangs weren't only a problem in the countryside. In the 1270s an enquiry was made at the behest of the Justices of the London Eyre into 'those harboured in the city and go out with bows and arrows, greyhounds and other dogs to commit trespass in forests, parks and fishponds belonging to the king and others'.[62]

One case clearly shows how profitable the administration of justice could be happened in the New Forest in 1275. Roger de Menles and six other men went into the forest with bows arrows and greyhounds and took a buck and a doe. Roger was described as a habitual offender against the venison and fined 400 marks (£266/13/4*d*) to clear all his offences.[63] This is a very large sum, and to have any purpose at all, Roger must have been wealthy. He may well have been one of those who enjoyed hunting and was frustrated by the extent of the royal hunting preserves under a king, Henry III, who seems to have had little, if any, interest in hunting. Unfortunately for Roger, Henry's successor, Edward I was a much more formidable king who had a keen interest in hunting, a combination of circumstances which may have led to Roger's heavy fine.

Men who had substantial landholdings within the bounds of a royal forest had particular problems when hunting within their own lands. In 1281 Roger de Somery, the son or grandson of the Roger de Somery who made an agreement with the Earl of Winchester about hunting rights noted below, was hunting with dogs in his own chase at Baggerugge in the forest of Cannock when his dogs put up a stag which fled towards the nearby forest of Kinver. Thomas, the son of

William of Womborne 'came up with bows and arrows and shot the stag in front of the dogs', but the beast actually died within the bounds of the royal forest. Hugh de Sapy, one of Roger's household, dragged the stag out of the forest back into Roger's chase, and took the venison back to where Roger was staying. As a result Roger had to appear before the king, Edward I, for the offence of taking venison out of a royal forest.[64] Since the beast was shot in Roger's own chase Thomas the archer had committed no offence, but Roger did, through his man Hugh. This case demonstrates again how difficult it could be for men to hunt successfully and legally in their own landholdings, if these were in or adjacent to royal forests. This was one of the longest-standing grievances between the king and his landholding subjects as regards Forest Law.

In the last decade of the thirteenth century Ingelram de Gynes was charged before the Justices in Eyre for Lancaster Forest. He and members of his household were seen hunting with greyhounds in Quernmore Forest. One of the party, John son of Ralph of Bray, shot a fallow deer and took it away.[65]

In 1311, a group of twelve men from various backgrounds including a woodward, a shepherd and a page went hunting in Pickering forest with twelve greyhounds, bows and arrows. They shot at a hart but missed, whereupon the forester came upon them. The men fled but the foresters seized nine hounds, two bows, six arrows and a horse carrying food and drink.[66] Clearly some of the men had a reasonable income because of the number of greyhounds they had with them and they expected their poaching to take some time given the 'picnic' they had with them. While the number of hounds these men had is unusual, the number of bows and arrows recovered is less so. The number of hounds involved suggests that some of the men were working with the hounds to find deer and drive them towards the others who were ready to shoot them in an informal bow and stable hunt. The ratio of six arrows to two bows fits in with the manuscript illustrations of the period where men are usually shown with only two or three arrows each.

One of the problems when using hounds to hunt deer is stopping them eating the deer they help catch. In legal hunting this is much less likely because the huntsmen could concentrate on controlling the hounds, who in turn were rewarded at the ritual of unmaking the beasts. However, poachers did not always have such control over their hounds. In 1313 Peter Mauley and a group of companions went into Pickering Forest equipped with bows, arrows and greyhounds. They took two harts, one of which they carried off to Peter's house, but the other one was eaten by the dogs.[67] Peter was fined for this, and three of his companions outlawed. But this does not seem to have affected

his behaviour greatly since, twenty years later he was caught poaching again.

Robert of Acklam, often called just Robert Acklam, and his family were active poachers for over thirty years in the forest of Pickering. In that theirs was a family enterprise they resemble the Le Poers and de Bracys active in Feckenham Forest noted above. While it is difficult to know their place in society, they must have had some standing locally, possibly as freemen with a middling landholding sufficient to support the family well, since their poaching companions included a knight (*miles*) and a lord of the manor on occasion. Their earliest recorded offence against the king's venison was in 1293, when Robert Acklam, his son John and some others were seen to use five hounds to chase a hind. The hind escaped the hounds but was later found dead 'pierced with an arrow'. While this may have been another opportunist poacher's arrow it was likely to belong to Robert's party since he and his companions regularly used bows and arrows in their activities. Whoever owned the arrow Robert, his son John and the other were all outlawed. In the following year Robert, his three sons, named as John, Duket and Geoffrey, Geoffrey Lepingdon and others unknown, killed three hinds with bows arrows and a pair of greyhounds. They retired to the Abbot of Whitby's sheepfold, and then went back to Robert's house. Robert clearly had useful contacts since one of the three men recorded as assisting them after the hunt was Roger, the park keeper of Peter Manley. They were all outlawed. This had no effect because soon afterwards, Robert, his son Duket, Geoffrey Lepingdon, John, lord of the manor of Barrowby and others took three harts and hinds with bows arrows and greyhounds, and then divided the meat between them. Again they were all outlawed. The family either behaved themselves, or more likely the records of their misdeeds have been lost since they next appear in 1323, when a new member of the family, Peter offended. He seems to have mixed with the local gentry since in June 1323 Peter, Sir Robert Capoun (titled *dominus* in this record) and others took a deer with bows, arrows and hounds. Later in the same year he was part of a party of sixteen including Sir Robert (now titled miles), Sir John Fauconberge (*miles*) and three foresters which took deer using their usual equipment. They had to pay substantial fines after claiming unsuccessfully that Edward II had pardoned them because they supported him against Thomas Earl of Lancaster. A year later Geoffey, son of Robert Acklam reappears when he was outlawed yet again for taking game with bow arrows and hounds. Sir Robert Capoun seems quite as enthusiastic as the Acklams when it comes to the king's venison since he and his companions, who included at least one gentleman, were recorded taking deer with bows arrows and hounds on two more occasions in 1323.[68] It seems clear

that being outlawed, however temporarily, had no effect on the Acklam family's standing locally in these three decades.

In 1323, a partially damaged record concerning Lancaster Forest mentions a knight Sir William (his surname is lost), Richard the harper of Chester and many other unidentified men entered Folwood Forest. They hunted there with greyhounds and running dogs, taking three harts and wounding two hinds with arrows. The latter escaped.[69] This party came prepared for all hunting eventualities, since running hounds differ from greyhounds in that they have greater stamina and strength to pursue game for much longer periods than a greyhound can. Despite having these hounds, Sir William's party still lost two wounded beasts, which might suggest a lack of serious purpose on their part.

However, examples of men with a more committed approach to poaching occurred in the forest of Pickering in the first half of the fourteenth century. On two occasions in 1334, Nicholas Meynall went poaching in the forest, each time he had a small group of companions equipped with bows, arrows and greyhounds. One was unsuccessful in that Meynall and his associates shot a hind but it was recovered by the foresters. The second was much more serious. Meynall, with four named companions including Peter Mauley who has been mentioned before, took forty-three harts and hinds using bows arrows and greyhounds. In a significant act of defiance towards the foresters, they left the heads of nine of the beasts on stakes on Blakey Moor.[70] This may have been a parody of the '*present*', a hunting ritual wherein the heads of bucks or harts were put on a stake or spear and paraded as part of the 'unmaking' of the deer at the end of a successful hunt.[71] The size of the fines paid by Meynall and Mauley in particular for this offence suggest that they were reasonably wealthy.

Poaching by Noble Households

Sometimes great nobles hunted in the royal forests, but depending on the mettle of the king, they could find that they were mistaken if they believed that their status would grant them immunity from the Forest Law.

There are a good number of cases of poaching where the offenders are described as being servants, employees or members of the household of wealthier men, both lay and clerical. In some of these cases it difficult to know whether the head of the household was aware of the offences and sponsoring them or not.

One family who definitely encouraged their household to poach were the Paunceforts in 1267 when 'some evildoers' entered Feckenham Forest with greyhounds, bows and arrows. The foresters

found one of the greyhounds and took it to a colleague's house for safekeeping, both so that its owner could be identified, and because it had some value in its own right. The hound belonged to the household of Isabella Pauncefort of Bentley, and members of the household recovered it by force of arms. There was clearly tension between Isabella and her men and the royal foresters since the court record reports that 'many of her household were accustomed to do injury to the king's venison with her knowledge and support.'[72] In 1274 Richard Pauncefort, probably Isabella's son, was poaching. He entered the forest with five companions, including Bate, son of Robert Selverlock, and shot a buck which they brought back to Robert's house in Bentley.[73] In the following year Adam le Leung, woodward of Alice Pauncefort was one of a group of four men led by William le Carettur who went into the forest with bows and arrows and two mastiffs. They took a buck and carried the meat back to William's house.

In that same year members of the household of another distinguished lady fell foul of the complexities of Forest Law. Walter le Tayllur, and his groom William, who were members of Lady Anabel de Segrave's household, shot a stag in the fields outside the bounds of Kinver Forest, but the wounded beast ran back within the forest before it died. They recovered the venison took it back to Lady Anabel's house.[74] Again the men's offence fell into two parts because of the intricacies of Forest Law. Firstly, by shooting a stag, a mature red deer, they committed an offence since red deer were reserved for the king.[75] Secondly, while they were hunting legitimately where they shot the beast, they committed an offence against Forest Law by recovering the venison from inside the royal forest.

In 1270–1 men of the household of Matilda, Countess of Gloucester at Shipton under Wychwood were taking venison from Wychwood Forest. The record of the charges put before the Justices was that the men took does without licence and brought the meat back to Countess' house at Shipton where she 'knowingly received them with the aforesaid venison'. It was 'also found that when the same Countess came to that place her men and servants were accustomed to enter the forest with dogs, greyhounds, bows and arrows to take venison at will'. The record goes on to say that 'Richard, former reeve of Shipton is the leader of the same wrongdoers in the forest, leading them to which places the Lord King's deer frequent the most, and how they will be able to catch them most quickly'.[76] The record makes no mention of Matilda hunting herself. It is clear that the success of these hunting expeditions depended on the knowledge of local men, particularly Richard, who, since he has been reeve, would have been a peasant well established in the community of Shipton.

In 1273 eight named men of the Prior of Worcester's household, including Henry Bonsquier were accustomed to hunt hares and foxes with bows, arrows and the Prior's dogs. They claimed that the current prior didn't know of their actions. However, the prior must either have been frequently absent, or have been very trusting in regard to his household since, in the following year, John, his woodward at Himbleton and Geoffrey chaplain of Tibberton were charged with being accustomed to enter the forest with bows and arrows.[77] It is difficult to believe that the Prior was as innocent as he claimed, since in 1280 Henry was again reported to be in the forest with others hunting hares and foxes with bows, arrows and dogs.[78]

The nobility didn't only poach through the activities of their households; sometimes they raided the royal forests in person. Lord William de Valance, two of his knights, two of his sons and some foreign guests went hunting in Kinver Forest in 1276. Lord William himself killed a buck with a bow and arrow, while one of his sons shot a hind.[79] They ended up before the King's court, since the king was the redoubtable Edward I who had a keen interest in his forests. However, this didn't seem to greatly affect Lord William's regard for the royal forests, since three years later he was encouraging his men to poach in Feckenham Forest in Worcestershire. Two of his men at Inkberrow, Simon of Fescham, the Woodward and Srut, a carter, with others unknown killed a buck in the wood at Oddingley, and took the venison to John of Inkberrow's house. The record makes it clear that the poachers followed normal hunting practice and butchered the buck in the forest, and only brought out the meat. This was a sensible practice to minimize the evidence of poaching back in the village by leaving the bones, offal and hide in the forest. While this case may have been the men poaching for their own gain, the court record states that Simon carried a bow and barbed arrows in the forest and did great damage to the venison 'on orders of Lord William de Valence.'[80] Simon had committed two offences against Forest Law, poaching venison and carrying a bow and arrows in the royal forest without a licence. This latter offence seems to show a very casual approach to Forest Law since either Simon or more likely Lord William could have paid to licence Simon carrying a bow in the forest. But then since Lord William himself had been before the King's court three years earlier for taking venison, he clearly did not take Forest Law very seriously. Simon's job would require good knowledge of woodland, and he seems to have been an experienced archer. The barbed arrows had become the normal arrowheads used for serious hunting by this time, so Simon was well prepared for hunting, quite probably at his master's expense.

During the last decade of the thirteenth century and the first three

decades of the fourteenth century the very location of the large royal forest of Pickering presented three major concerns for the foresters. Not only did they have problems with the household of the Abbot of Whitby and that of Henry Percy, but they also had to deal with bored foreign soldiers from the garrison of Scarborough Castle. In 1313 several Gascons from the garrison accompanied five local men including Roger Carter, his brother and his son, hunting for hares with bows, arrows and hounds. Nine years later two unidentified Gascons from the garrison got skilled local help from Thomas the woodward of Stainton to go poaching with bows and arrows and a greyhound.[81] There may well have been other unreported poaching activities by members of the garrison at Scarborough since this was a period of great unsettlement in the north of England. In 1312–13 Henry Percy, Baron Percy was one of the leading barons trying to separate Edward II from his favourite, Piers Gaveston. In 1312 Percy, had been forced to give up Scarborough Castle to Gaveston. He was one of the leaders of the force which besieged Gaveston in the castle, taking him after a short siege and executing him. By the early 1320s the North was in a state of near civil war, culminating in the Battle of Boroughbridge in 1322, an account of which can be found in chapter VIII

The venison of the Forest of Pickering suffered frequent attacks from the household of Henry Percy, Baron Percy at the beginning of the fourteenth century. Percy was well established as a major landowner in the region and an experienced military leader under Edward I in Scotland. In 1304 men of Percy's household were reported as poaching although their methods are not recorded. In 1305 four men including a clerk from Percy's household were identified while poaching with bows, arrows, four greyhounds and two running dogs. This was a well prepared hunting party, perhaps reflecting the household they came from. In 1307 Ralph Skinner, Henry Percy's huntsman, was in the forest with four companions, one of whom had also been identified poaching in 1305, using bows, arrows and a greyhound to take a buck. In 1312 Walter, huntsman to Lord (*domini*) Henry Percy was in the forest with six companions using bows, arrows and a hound to take two hinds. They took these back to Henry Percy's house with his knowledge. Walter and three of the others were outlawed, probably for non-attendance before the Justices.[82] As was noted above, this was a time of particular tension between Henry Percy and other major nobles on the one hand and Edward II and Piers Gaveston on the other, so Percy's open disregard of Forest Law should not be surprising. These activities could also be small signs of the attitude that the Percys showed later in the century, that the North East of England was theirs to be exploited in their interests.

Religious Households and Clerics

A large number of men, about 5 per cent of adult males in the thirteenth century, could claim Benefit of Clergy in medieval England. They presented a clear problem to the enforcers of Forest Law, so much so that in 1184 Henry II made specific mention of clerks in the Assize of Woodstock declaring that 'No clerk shall transgress in hunting or by breaking other forest regulations.'[83]

In the first decade of the thirteenth century, Peter de Paris, a clerk, was fined 3 marks (£2) for being found in the forest with a bow.[84] This is a substantial fine for a small offence and is a small demonstration of how potentially lucrative rigorous enforcement of Forest Law could be for the king before Magna Carta restricted his prerogatives.

Five clerks, Thomas of Cumpton, Henry of Kinneton, Alan of York, Augustus of Devon and Nigel Scot were taken with bows and arrows in Shotover Forest in 1231.[85] This seems to have been one of the earliest recorded cases of students at Oxford University getting into trouble with the authorities. The names of the clerks shows a fine geographic spread for their origins demonstrating the national importance of Oxford University at this early date in its history.

In 1250–1 Chaplain Robert le Noble of Sudbury managed to commit three offences against the forest in one visit. He was caught cutting wood (an offence against the vert) while having with him parts of a trap and two barbed arrows without fletches.[86] There was no mention of Robert carrying a bow, and fletchless arrows would have been of little use with one anyway. It is possible that these fletchless arrows were going to be used as part of a trap. In the following year seven clerks and a chaplain were taken by the foresters of Huntingdon Forest at Stangate. The foresters arrested them on suspicion of robbery, although they were well equipped for illegal hunting since they were carrying five yew bows with strings and three Welsh (*walecthis*) arrows and a bird bolt (*bosun*).[87] This record is unusually precise. Mention of bowstrings was made to emphasise that the bows were able to be used and presented an active threat. This is an early mention of yew bows. Four arrows to be used with five bows seems inadequate, unless the clerks had already shot some. While many hunters and poachers seemed to carry a small number of arrows in the records of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, no doubt reflecting the care that men took to recover their arrows for reuse. They did this in part from a desire to leave no evidence of illegal hunting, since the discovery of an arrow could lead to the foresters making enquiries and even identify the poacher from the arrow, and it may also reflect the cost of good hunting arrows. Carrying both arrows and a bird bolt, or

blunt, shows that these clerks were prepared for a range of game.

The men of an Abbot's household showed scant regard for the Forest Law and its servants, when, in 1256 a forester in the New Forest caught William Curdy carrying a bow and arrows in the forest and left him in the custody of two men. William's brother Richard and nineteen other men, 'all servants of the Abbot of Beaulieu', beat the custodians and released William. The Forest Justices asked the Sheriff to follow this up with the Abbot.[88] While no mention is made of anyone claiming the privilege of clergy at the hearing, the Justices' action recognised that they could do little in this case without the intervention of the Sheriff, a powerful royal official. Henry III was a relatively weak king, whose reign was marked by a long power struggle between the king and his barons. Both Magna Carta and the Forest Charter were issued and reissued in his reign, and these were used by the knightly class and the magnates both lay and clerical, in concert with the development of Common Law, to contain the king's prerogative and in particular to limit the extent of the royal forests. While Henry III was keen to protect his rights, he was not an enthusiastic hunter, so the royal forests were considered more as sources of income and useful resources than as personal sporting arenas in his reign. This neglect may have encouraged poaching since people might have thought of the game in the underused forests as good venison going to waste.

In 1262 Ivo, Parson of Bishampton, Simon and William both sons of Robert de Monte of Grafton and other unnamed men spent three days in Feckenham Forest with bows and arrows 'with intent to offend against the king's venison.'[89] They don't seem to have been very successful because they were charged with taking one deer, a 'hart's soar' (a three or four-year-old buck) to Ivo's house. This does not seem much of a return for three days hunting, so perhaps they were hampered in their activities by a lack of hounds to find and chase the deer since none are mentioned in the court record.

In 1263–4 a group of men who lived in Lichfield and Stafford and were charged with being 'customary malefactors of the King's venison' in the forest of Cannock may not all have been clerics at the time of their offences, but in their subsequent activities they seem to have been more committed to the religious life than the average man. They included William Tolose 'who was with the Bishop of Chester', Henry de Aumary, Colin the Huntsman of Roger de Aumary and eight others, including two pairs of brothers. They hunted using bows, arrows and greyhounds, possibly in a style similar to bow and stable hunting. They claimed that they had the patronage of Ralph Bassett, whose lands at Drayton Bassett were within the forest so that, as the court record states, no forester dared to charge them. Bassett seems to have

been very interested in the king's venison since, as has already been noted, his household poached after his death. However, the Justices of the Forest Eyre had no such concerns and several of the men were imprisoned until bailed, although, Colin the huntsman, possibly the only professional archer in the group, could not be found and so was outlawed. John of Perton one of the other men involved escaped the Justices because he was a monk in the Priory at Wenlock by the time the case came before them. Henry de Aumary was also beyond the reach of the Justices because he had become a Hospitaller in the Holy Land.[90]

Five years later there was another case where a group of men with links to the clergy were similarly described as 'open and common wrongdoers against venison with bows and arrows.'[91] Nicholas of Dumbleton, a scribe, William, brother of Alexander de la Hurst of Studeley, John, nephew of the vicar of Inkberrow, John le Mous treasurer of the vicar of Inkberrow and Nicholas son of Alexander Smith of Marton clearly managed to evade the foresters on number of occasions to earn their reputation.

Religious houses seem to have been relaxed in their supervision of their guests. In 1268 Robert, who may have fallen on hard times since he is described as 'once a Steward', was staying at Studley Priory, and is described as being 'accustomed to enter the forest [of Feckenham] with others with bow and arrows and greyhounds' and doing damage there. This phrase does not mean that they vandalised the trees, but means they poached deer since damage to the venison was the prime concern of the Foresters.

In 1269 Brother John Burel, the Converse (the monk who organised the lay brothers) of the Cistercian Abbey of Combe with unknown accomplices went into Kinver Forest many times in the venison season armed with bows and arrows. They took what venison they shot back to the Grange of the Abbey at Trescote. The Abbot had to come before the Justices to answer for his monk's activities.[92] This may well have been something of an embarrassment, since the Cistercians were a famously strict enclosed order of monks. Again there is no mention of the use of dogs.

In 1273, in what may have been a matter of a parson leading some of his congregation poaching for local benefit, Ralph Bagod, the parson of Morton Bagot, with four companions whose names suggest that they were common men, were charged being common offenders with bows, arrows and dogs.[93]

In 1277 there seems to have been a conspiracy between men of the Abbey of Waltham, some local men and at least one of the local knights to hunt the king's deer in the Forest of Essex. Richard of Brykendon, Thomas le Rous of Loughton, Reginald who was porter of

the Abbey of Waltham, Sir Thomas of Ardern and others who had died by the time of the hearing in 1292, went into the forest with harriers and bows and arrows. They killed five deer and took the meat to the Abbey and into London.[94] These men were clearly taking the king's venison for food, but it is very difficult to believe that any of them were doing this out of serious need given the status and role of two of the named perpetrators. This case is another example of the slow pace of forest justice, fifteen years passing between the men committing the offence and the court hearing. This could have arisen because of Edward I's neglect of aspects of the administration of justice in this period of his reign because he was concentrating on his military campaigns in Wales.

In 1278 Nicholas of Ocham, a canon of Kenilworth and Geoffrey of Odenhale, a yeoman (*valettus*) of the priory went into the forest with bows and arrows and a red dog.[95] Whenever a report has a vague description of the dog used for hunting like this one, it is difficult to know whether the foresters just had a vague report or whether the dog was a non-descript beast. If the latter, it might suggest that the owners could not afford a hunting dog. Geoffrey was a servant of the priory, *valettus* is commonly translated in this way, rather than having any sense of meaning a free landholder, which becomes the more common meaning of yeoman in the later Middle Ages.

John of Surreye, vicar of Feckenham and Geoffrey du Parc a clerk, were particularly brazen poaching clerics.[96] In 1289 they were recorded as being members of a group of four sworn brothers, the others being, William Goule and Robert Rose, who with other unnamed accomplices regularly did damage to the king's venison. The court record states that John was 'master and principal ordainer of their misdeeds.' They were found in possession of twelve purse nets called 'blyndebycches' (hind traps) which were so fine that one man could carry them in a bundle on his back. Apparently they went into the forest by day or night with these nets and their archery equipment (*leur archergues*) This method of hunting allowed the hunters to come back in their own time to collect any netted prey because the prey could still graze while in the nets. The record doesn't make clear what type of bows they used. John and his 'brothers' were able to operate on this scale because they bribed many people in the neighbourhood, including foresters and verderers.

Occasionally senior clergymen fell foul of Forest Law. One example is found in the records of the Forest Justices for the forest of Essex in 1292. Richard, the Bishop of London had coursed for hares in the forest from his manors in the county. The huntsmen and some of the others following the dogs carried bows and arrows. The Bishop had been granted the right to course in the royal forest, but members of

his household committed an offence by carring bows and arrows in the forest without licence.[97] If the court record reflects the true circumstances of the case, and the Bishop's household were not planning a bit of poaching under cover of legitimate coursing, then this shows how precise administration of Forest Law could inconvenience men who were exercising their rights in a royal forest.

The household of the Abbot of Whitby seems to have been particularly interested in hunting in this period. The Abbey had its own forest by the early fourteenth century, which attracted poachers. But before that members of the household were a problem for the royal foresters of Pickering because they regularly infringed Forest Law. In 1294 Alan, the huntsman of the Abbot of Whitby, was outlawed for using his vocational skills to shoot a prickett (a two-year-old male fallow deer), while over twenty years later the Abbot's sumpter was part of a group of men fined for poaching with bows, arrows and hounds.[98]

Clerics and their agents continued to plague Pickering Forest. In 1323 a chaplain, William Ergon, seems to have gone poaching on his own. He was caught after he had wounded a boar with his bow and arrow. Thirteen years later John Shepherd, parson of Levesham and John son of John Clerk killed a hart with bows and arrows. Unfortunately for them a forester caught them in the act and they were fined.[99] At some time in the late 1320s or early 1330s Richard Moryn of Rosedale and five others, four of whom came from the same village, killed two deer using bows and arrows. The foresters reported to the Justices that Richard and his companions did this at 'the behest of the Abbot of St Mary's' in York. The poachers may have offered this information as some sort of defence, or as an attempt to gain powerful support. They were not formal members of the Abbot's household or the foresters would have informed the court of this. However, the reason that the Abbot may have engaged Richard and he was probably a member of a family of habitual poachers since a Robert Moryn was observed poaching as part of a group using bows, arrows and hounds in 1331 and 1336.[100]

Non-Royal Parks and Hunting Preserves

Great nobles, and other lesser landholders, wanted to enjoy hunting in their own estates, but their rights to do so were limited by the pervasive nature of Forest Law. Only thirty-five hunting parks were listed in the Domesday Book which may illustrate how difficult it was for landholders to hunt on their own lands under the Norman kings.[101] This was a grievance between the nobles and the king as early as Henry I's reign. Magna Carta and the Forest Charter restricted

the power of the royal administration to use Forest Law oppressively to restrict hunting by nobles and knights on their own landholdings. It is probable that the rapid increase in the number of private parks in Henry III's reign was a consequence of this. Between 1227 and 1258 Henry granted 630 charters of free warren to allow the more substantial landholders to set up private hunting parks and by the early part of the fourteenth century there were perhaps 3,200 parks.[102] In turn this provided many more opportunities for illegal hunting. Not surprisingly this enormous increase in the number of parks was very unpopular with the mass of the rural population, because of the amount of land being reserved by knights and noble landholders for what the peasants viewed as an extravagant and non-productive purpose.

Besides taking over some arable land to make parks, some landholders antagonised the peasants by taking over common land, both pasture and woodland, to create parks. By doing this the rights of the local peasants to grazing and foraging could be seriously limited, which would have a negative effect on the peasants' standard of living. One expression of this antagonism towards the creators of parks is recorded in the Great Chronicle of Thomas Walsingham, a monk at St Albans. Henry Burghersh, Bishop of Lincoln and Chancellor of England, created a park at his manor at Fingest in Buckinghamshire in the early 1330s. This park covered 300 acres much of which had been arable land, including some tenant plots. Walsingham recorded what he claimed was a local legend. Burghersh had offended God by the harm that he did to the poor with his park making and as a result his soul could find no rest. It was condemned to be the ghostly keeper of the park, dressed in green, carrying a bow and arrows and a hunting horn.[103] Versions of this folktale, the punishment of an obsessive hunter with eternal restlessness, can be found in many places in England. While the legend of Herne the Hunter in Windsor Park is different since he is a supernatural protector of the park who has life-threatening powers, but the appearance of the ghostly Burghersh is similar to Herne's in some accounts.

There is more evidence in the surviving records for illegal hunting in royal forests and parks than there is for poaching in 'non regal' private parks and forests. This arises more from legal and historical factors than any likelihood of poaching being less common in private parks. These factors include: the chance survival of medieval records, with royal records being more actively preserved in the centuries since the medieval period; the king's Justices and courts creating more records; and the enormous scale of the royal forests up to the early fourteenth century. Since private forests and parks were not covered

by the Forest Law, they were likely to suffer more from poaching, since the locals would be much less restricted in their ownership of bows and arrows and 'unlawed' dogs. It is also likely that these private parks were less well protected by foresters and parkers. The situation became complicated when private parks or forests were within or near royal forests.

Two agreements from 1240 record the Earl of Arundel's rights as regards hunting in his own woodlands and protecting them. The first declared that it was lawful for the Earl and his heirs to have foresters in all the woods that were part of the manor of Barwe (Barrow on Soar). The foresters were allowed to carry bows, genderez (unbarbed) arrows, darts and shafts throughout the woods and the immediate area. The second agreement covered the forest of the Earl of Winchester which seems to have come into Arundel's hands. He was allowed nine bows or huntsmen in the forest and six hounds for taking wounded deer.[104]

Although Forest Law did not apply directly to the hunting forests and parks owned by the nobles and gentry, it provided a template for the legal agreements and practices within them. An example of this is recorded in 1247 when Roger de Quincy, Earl of Winchester and Roger de Somery, Baron of Dudley made a legal agreement which outlined their hunting rights in Charnwood Forest and Bradgate Park which was sited within the forest.[105] This agreement which echoed that between Arundel and Winchester, allowed Roger de Somery and his heirs to hunt in the Earl's forest at any hour (within the appropriate season) with no more than nine bows and six hounds. If they wounded a beast which escaped them over the deerleaps in the boundaries of Bradgate Park, then one or two of de Somery's men could follow the wounded beast with dogs, but without bows and arrows. De Somery also agreed that when his foresters were working in his woods in the area, they would carry only blunt arrows (pilettas) not barbed arrows. As a result the likelihood of them poaching was much reduced. The limitations these agreements put on Arundel and de Somery's hunting, suggests very strongly that they only hunted in the bow and stable style. In particular, the ratio of the number of archers to hounds allowed, and in Arundel's case the explicit mention of the dogs' role in support of the archers, make it clear that only bow and stable hunting was envisaged.

In 1274–5 one of the great magnates protected his hunting rights in a very determined fashion. The Seneschal of Earl Warenne sent several men to the Abbot of Roche's grange at Armthorpe, which was outside the Earl's lands. They seized a monk, Brother Richard the Granger and John, the Abbot's forester because John had shot 'a wild beast with an arrow in the Abbot's wood and it was followed as far as the Earl's

warren.' The abbot paid a large fine, £40, for the offence of his servant, but while Brother Richard was released, John the forester was imprisoned for a year.[106] The Earl's Seneschal was enforcing his lord's hunting rights with the same rigour that the royal Justices and foresters did for the king. This case highlights the problems foresters and huntsmen employed by the clergy or lesser nobles had. No one accused John of having shot the beast illegally; it was his pursuit into the Earl's warren that was the offence. In 1279 Robert of Stertrford and others went into a free warren in the wood at Eppesho in Bedfordshire belonging to John Peyvre to hunt. They are described as hunting 'with horn and cry' and three barking dogs, although they didn't catch the hares they chased. The record doesn't make clear if they used bows as well in this hunt, but they had been in the warren the day before shooting bows and arrows for sport. Unfortunately for them John was a royal ward, so his warren seems to have been efficiently protected.[107]

In 1287 Walter Ylthing went into the Earl of Cornwall's park at Bylton with a bow and arrows and took a deer. William Gretheved came upon him and asked him what he wanted. Walter made no answer but shot an arrow at William who fled. Walter pursued him, so William drew his own bow and shot Walter dead. Although William was acting in self-defence, he was still held in jail until the king's pardon was granted.[108] Both because of the nature of the offence and because the Earl of Cornwall was the king's second cousin, there would be no doubt that William would be pardoned. In 1295 William Burdet of Louseby in Leicestershire, who was of knightly status, entered Hugh le Despensers's park in the Charnwood area. He was recorded as having used force of arms, namely swords, bows and arrows to hunt and carry away game.[109] Since the record does not make it clear how many men accompanied William on his expedition we don't know if William himself was using a bow, but it was quite probable given the enthusiasm of the English nobility for bow and stable hunting.

In 1306 five local men, including the son of a tanner were before Abbot of Ramsey's court for entering the Abbot's park with bows, arrows and greyhounds. These men were also declared to be common malefactors against the venison in that park.[110]

In 1316 Robert Nodger was attached at the court of Wakefield manor 'for leading archers and malefactors into the lord's free chase.' He admitted the offence and was fined 40/-. In the same year another man, Richard, son of Hugh was found in the chase with a bow and arrows. He had also set traps to take game.[111] These two cases highlight the different ways men poached in the same area. The description of Richard's offences makes it sound as though he was

poaching for food in that he was working alone and used different methods to take whatever he could catch. However, Robert's offence reads as though he just facilitated yet another case of illegal hunting, by taking advantage of the prime purpose of a park, namely to provide good sport. But, having noted these differences, it is important to remember that common men were always poaching for food, and that some of them seem to have made more of a sport of their activities.

In 1321–2 a very mixed group of twelve men including the Lord of the Manor of Sowerby and two habitual offenders against venison were seen in Blansby Park with bows arrows and hounds. This record in common with a number of others made no mention of them achieving anything despite their numbers.[112]

In 1327 Walter Kirby, William Thweng and William Loftus were also caught in Blansby Park with bows and arrows, a horn, a greyhound and a small dog. Their defence was that they were crossing the moor between Egton and Yedingham when they got lost in the fog and wandered into the park unknowingly.[113] They did not explain why they were crossing the moor well equipped for hunting.

Some of the court records read like a modern police investigation, in that no one had been caught literally red handed. In 1327 Adam Strekayse had the misfortune to find a broken bloody arrow in the Forest of Holne. An inquisition was held and twenty-five local men swore that they did not know either who drew (*tractavit*) the arrow or who carried it, but they said that Adam 'told his neighbours that he well recognised the arrow and well knew how to carry it to its fellows.' Another entry in the court roll records that Nicholas, son of Hugh de Littlewode, was cleared both of killing a stag and of having anything to do with 'the arrow found all bloody in the forest by Adam.' It is not clear from the court record whether or not Adam accused Nicholas.[114] In the following year there was another example from John de Warenne, Earl of Surrey's forest at Sourbyschire. Again there was an inquest 'touching an arrow found in a hind, who drew the arrow, or owned it, or carried it.'[115] The men of the nearby townships of Soland and Richewith swore that they couldn't answer these questions and stated that they didn't recognise the arrow. These cases make it clear that, in the forest at least, the individual appearance of arrows could sometimes betray their owner's identity.

The excavations at the manorial complex at Faccombe Netherton in Hampshire give a clear insight into legal hunting in private woodlands in or near the bounds of a royal forest. Faccombe wood is within the bounds of Chute Forest but this doesn't seem to have prevented the residents of the manor taking a good number of deer at various times up to about 1356.[116] Archaeologists found bones from a considerable

number of deer.

	fallow deer taken	red deer taken
Norman period	26	6
Medieval period	8	8

The bones are mostly leg bones, which confirm evidence in near contemporary hunting manuals, and from some of the poaching cases noted in this chapter, that the leg joints were the most sort after cuts. Whether the lords of the manor of Faccombe were deliberately poaching in Chute Forest, effectively poaching by taking red deer on their own land that had come out of the forest, or hunting with royal permission we do not know. But many of the bones were found in a compact layer in a pit which suggests large-scale hunts. The change in the type of deer taken by the household at Faccombe may reflect better protection of the venison of Chute Forest, but is considered to be more likely to demonstrate over hunting of red deer. The first fallow deer bones are found in a pit containing the remains of thirty-three deer dating to between 1160 and 1180. As has been noted elsewhere, the evidence of this pit suggests that all these deer were either taken in one big hunt or a series of hunts that were very close to each other in time.[117] Another example of this sort of large-scale hunting for meat carried out on royal orders in the thirteenth century from an order for sixty does from Chute Forest to be sent for the royal Christmas feast in 1251.[118]

Poaching by Foresters, Verderers and Parkers

One thing that very quickly becomes apparent in the court records the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries is that the very men whose jobs made them responsible for the wellbeing of ‘venison and vert’ used their skills to poach. Foresters were employed in both royal and non-royal forests. The most important person in any royal forest was the Chief Forester, sometimes called a Warden. For him the appointment was both a sign of royal favour and an opportunity to make money from the administration of the forest. This latter was important because they probably made a substantial payment to the royal administration to get the office in the first place. The character of these men, and their personal involvement in the administration of the forest inevitably varied. The Foresters in Fee were beneath them, and were men who held lands within the bounds of the forest for the service of being active forest officers. Beneath both these were the foresters, both riding and foot paid to do the work of protecting the forest. Private forests tended to have fewer foresters employed in the

same role as the riding and foot foresters in royal forests. Parkers had similar duties in the private parks, but their responsibilities tended to be on a smaller scale, since the parks themselves were much smaller than the forests. As some court records of offences against the venison make clear, some foresters also had paid servants who helped in the practical enforcement of Forest Law. The holders of lands within the bounds of a royal forest that were in law exempt from direct control by the royal forest administration were required to appoint woodwards. Although these men were not royal appointees, they had to swear an oath of office in front of the Justices of the Forest pleas. If a landholder could not present a sworn woodward at a Forest Eyre, he could forfeit the lands that he held within the bounds of the royal forest, another way Forest Law bore down upon private landholders.[119] The majority of the men employed in these jobs developed better than average skills with bows and arrows. They made up a core of near professional archers who were sought after as military archers before Edward III's military successes in the 1330s and '40s provided the stimulus for much more widespread development of archery skills.

In 1265, Walter of Bekeford was a servant in the household of Ralph, the woodward to the Abbot of Winchcombe for the wood of La Boxe. He offended against Forest Law by carrying a bow and arrows both in the Abbot's wood and elsewhere in the royal forest of Wychwood without having sworn to abide by the Forest Law.[120] This highlights an aspect of the Forest Law which caused much friction between the Justices and royal foresters on the one hand and other nobles and magnates holding land within the boundaries of the royal forest. The king's interest in preserving the venison and the vert in royal forests overrode the interests of all others holding land within the bounds of a royal forest. So, in this case, Walter, effectively one of the Abbot's men maintaining his woods, had to swear an oath before the Forest Justices, before he could carry the tools of his trade in the Abbot's woods. Unfortunately, he complicated his position by hunting a stag, which he wounded with an arrow but lost, in the king's wood at Bloxham. The king's huntsmen found the stag dead and putrid. Walter fled arrest and died before his case was considered by the Justices. This case highlights another grievance arising from Forest Law. Walter may have shot the stag on land he believed to be the Abbot's, although, since it was found on royal land the king's huntsmen assumed he was poaching.

In the unsettled times around Henry III's death and the succession of his redoubtable son Edward I, who was absent on Crusade at the time of his accession, foresters in the New Forest area, whether royal or not, seem to have been keen poachers. In 1270 a band of about sixty

malefactors of mixed social backgrounds, including three foresters, a hayward and David le Archer went into the forest equipped with bows, arrows, dogs and greyhounds to hunt for two days. They were successful, taking fifteen harts and hinds, a fawn and other beasts (possibly the less esteemed roe deer). Beaulieu Abbey refused them hospitality, probably because the community did not want be accused of harbouring such obvious malefactors. More evidence of the mixed social backgrounds of the members of this large group of poachers is found in a plea entered in the following year when two members of it, James Russell 'and his boy Dryne', were accused of entering the forest with a bow and arrows and a greyhound and taking a buck.[121] Although Russell was clearly a habitual poacher, he was also of sufficient social and financial status to stand as a pledge for another poacher in the New Forest. In the following year a group of fourteen men, including two different foresters from those involved in the previous incident, and Geoffrey and Arnold le Archer 'came into the forest with bows and arrows, crossbows and greyhounds with the guidance of Thomas le Brut' who was a royal forester. These men were also very successful taking a hart and eight bucks and does.[122] The appearance in these cases of three men named 'Archer' is interesting. As has been noted elsewhere, men with this name often owed the king service as an archer in peace or war. In the context of these poaching expeditions, it meant that at least three free men with considerable archery skills were involved, in addition to the five foresters.

It wasn't only foresters and parkers who used their archery skills necessary for their work who poached. In 1271 the foresters and verderers of Kinver Forest brought a case before the Justices that John 'called the Hunter (venator)' of Thasseley in Shropshire, was seen going through the wood at Cheksull with a bow and arrows. He shot a doe which died in a nearby haye. He didn't collect the venison. When John eventually appeared before the Justices, he was fined only half a mark (6/8*d*), much lower than many other offenders in the records of the Staffordshire Eyre.[123]

In 1273 John of Bampthone and John of Cachefrensch shot a buck and took the venison back John of Bampthorne's house 'where his wife was staying'.[124] Since John of Cachefrensch was a parker under Henry de Parco, it would be likely that he knew the ways of deer and was a competent archer.

In the same year William de Wytyndon, who was one of the verderers of Kinver Forest, went into to the forest poaching with companions from the local community on two occasions. On both occasions the men used bows and arrows. On the first they shot a doe and divided the venison between them. On the second they were in the forest all day seemingly without success. The foresters challenged

them as they were leaving the forest, but William and his companions 'insulted' them and escaped into the darkness. William's position makes it likely that a number of the poachers were known to the foresters, so they were promptly arrested and fined. Interestingly enough, William de Wrottesley whose own poaching activities are outlined elsewhere stood surety for one of these men.[125]

In 1274, William the Parker, a man who would have known the strictures of Forest Law as part of his work, was charged with a number of misdeeds at Wakefield Manor court. Among these he was charged that he 'ordered his servant, Richard Peny to feather an arrow so that it could not be recognised by anyone; and he did this with two grey goose feathers and one white one and bound it with white thread.'[126] The clear presumption was that William was planning to hunt illegally, since he was fined for giving this order. This is the clearest evidence that in the thirteenth century at least, a man for whom archery skills were a part of his job, made arrows himself, or had them made within his household, rather than resorting to a fletcher. It also confirms that the owners of arrows could often be identified from the appearance of the arrow itself, since the purpose of William's order was deceit. In William's case, it is possible that his arrows were deliberately identifiable because of his job. Later medieval hunting treatises such as 'The Master of Game' say that anyone who has slain anything should mark it so that each receives his just reward.[127] The easiest way for a hunting archer to do this would be to have a personal mark on his arrows.

In 1283 Ralph of Bischebury, who was a riding forester in the forest of Cannock, and his groom, Robert of Bokungham were described as 'malefactors of the king's venison.' On one occasion they set two greyhounds on a buck but didn't catch it. On another they were in the forest armed with bows and arrows with unidentified companions 'for the purpose of taking the king's venison'. They were seen by local shepherd, who was wounded in the arm by a barbed arrow shot by Ralph. Ralph was imprisoned for his breach of trust.[128]

In 1302, William 'called the Parker' was seen in the forest of Lancaster with a bow and arrows. He escaped when challenged by the foresters.[129] There is no mention of which one of the parks within the royal forest William was parker for. This case demonstrates the temptations presented by the lavish game in royal parks to men who were skilled archers working in other roles within the bounds of the forest.

In the same year John of Rygemayden a forester within the forest of Lancaster was accused that he 'commonly hunted deer with bow and barbed arrows' within the forest.[130] This is the only mention of the illicit use of barbed arrows in the records of justice in the forest of

Lancaster.

In 1303, Henry, the parker of Quernmore allowed four men into his park to hunt. They had bows arrows and four greyhounds, and spent three days in the park. They took venison and carried it away on a horse.[131] This is interesting because in a case in the previous year Henry had shot at two men poaching in the forest around his park, so was certainly prepared to be an effective forest officer. However this time he allowed poaching in his bailiwick. There is no mention of Henry being threatened so perhaps he was bribed, or maybe he thought that he could do what he liked in 'his' park.

In the early fourteenth century the New Forest seemed to suffer from foresters who were responsible for the smaller forests in the area becoming involved in illegal hunting within the New Forest. In 1315 William of Chesterfield, who was forester of Godeshill at the time, used his skills to shoot a doe, and carry away the carcase. Two other cases happened in the 1320s. In the first Richard of Trowe and Robert the carter used bows, arrows and greyhounds to take an unknown amount of venison. Richard le Stockere who was a forester in the New Forest 'was an accomplice and associate of them in the offence'. His involvement may well be part of the explanation for the uncertainty over the amount of venison that was taken. Richard of Trowe was also involved in the second of the cases, when he and ten other men, including Andrew the forester of Melchet, were named as habitual offenders against venison with bows and arrows.[132]

The records of the Forest Eyre for Pickering Forest include evidence of skilled archers among the ordinary people of Yorkshire as well as those employed in non-royal forests and parks. In 1324 Roger Mansergh, the Forester in Fee for Petronilla de Kynthorpe, William Dundale a forester, John Cruel and his son Edmund went hunting in the forest with greyhounds and bows and arrows. Edmund shot a hare, no mean feat, while one of the hounds caught another.[133] In the same year William Setrington, woodward of Levisham, killed a hind with a bow and arrow. He carried the beast off but was caught and bailed to appear before the Forest Justices.[134] When the Forest Eyre was held ten years later, he was outlawed for non-appearance. The records of justice in Pickering Forest frequently record outlawing for non-appearance as has been noted elsewhere. They do not include many references to the alleged perpetrator having died in the interval between the offence and the hearing which may indicate that when the Eyre was finally held, the forest officers made no enquiries as to whether the alleged malefactors were living or dead. But as other cases suggest some Yorkshire men seem to have been particularly careless of the Forest Justices, viewing outlawing as a temporary inconvenience which could be reversed later, or as a state of no

significance given their standing in the local community. Life in Yorkshire was severely disrupted by regular Scottish raids in the years after Bannockburn, so non-appearance before the Justices may mean that the men had left the area or been killed.

Sometimes a forest officer's family caused problems in a forest. The Eyre of Lancaster Forest for 1334–6 records that John Hamelyn and William, the son of Hugh the Parker went into Quernmore Forest with bows and arrows and shot a doe.[135] The record adds that they took away venison, making it clear as many records do, that illegal hunting was often primarily for the pot. This case may be a small piece of evidence that demonstrates how growing up in a household where archery was practised, as it would be in most foresters' and parkers' households, would lead to young men having archery skills regardless of their work. Young men like these later became a vital part of Edward III's armies. A final example of a forester taking too much interest in venison happened in Pickering Forest, actually while the Forest Eyre was happening. In 1336, a group of sixteen men went poaching with bows and arrows and hounds. They were recorded as taking a number of deer with hounds, whether these were just pulled down by the hounds or had already been wounded with arrows is not specified. The group included a forester, a serjeant and probably a group of relatives since three of the men had the same family name.[136]

Resisting Arrest

The ordinary foresters and parkers who tried to enforce the Forest Law had to be skilled, tough, brave men, since poachers often responded violently to being challenged. They faced this danger throughout the period despite the changes made to Forest Law in the Forest Charter. Clause 10 of the Charter removed the penalty of death, emasculation or maiming for those who illegally killed red or fallow deer: before this killing or frightening off the foresters with acts of violence had a clear benefit for the poachers since they could receive no worse penalty for killing a forester than they already risked by poaching at all. But after the reforms of the Forest Charter some poachers still put their lives in jeopardy by violently resisting the foresters. In the middle of the thirteenth century, Robert, who was Sir Geoffrey of Langley's hunter, was tied to an oak by an unknown man he had caught in the forest with a bow and arrows.[137] Another thirteenth-century case shows the dangers of attempting to arrest poaching gangs. Four foresters came upon a dozen men equipped with bows, arrows, greyhounds and nets just as they had caught a deer in one of their nets. The poachers resisted arrest, shooting one forester in the

thigh and beating the others. They used just enough violence to ensure their escape with their venison.[138] The records of the Northamptonshire Eyre of 1246 include another case where a group of foresters faced a small gang of very determined poachers. James of Thurlbear, the Forester of Rockingham, his brother Matthew who was a forester in the park at Brigstock and some walking foresters, waited in ambush for some poachers. They saw five greyhounds and managed to capture four of them before their owners appeared. The foresters hailed the five poachers, one of whom had a crossbow; the others had bows and arrows. The poachers fled, but realising the foresters were in pursuit, they turned and started to shoot at the foresters. Matthew was wounded with two Welsh arrows (*sagittis Waliscis*). One of these struck him under his left breast, making a wound 'to the depth of one hand aslant', the other struck his left arm 'to a depth of two fingers so that his life was despaired of. Despite this, or perhaps because of it, the foresters carried on a vigorous pursuit but lost the men in the dark forest. The seriousness of Matthew's chest wound suggests that either the poachers were shooting at close range, or at least one of them was using a powerful bow. An inquisition was held into Matthew's death, at which three of the greyhounds were identified as belonging to Simon of Kivelsworth. As a result he was imprisoned to await trial. While in general men were only imprisoned if they were too poor to make what we would call a bail payment, or of too low a standing within the community for anyone to make a suitable pledge for them, in this case Simon would have been held because of the killing.[139]

The walking foresters of Weybridge Forest were luckier in that they faced less resolute poachers. In August 1251 at around midnight they were in the forest going to watch over things near Alconbury. They came across a red greyhound worrying a doe, so they caught the hound. Then twelve men with three more greyhounds on leashes came up. One of these men carried an axe, another, a long staff (probably what we would now call a quarterstaff) and the others all had bows and arrows. The foresters challenged the men, who started to shoot arrows at them. The foresters shot back, and the poachers fell back into the wood, and escaped in the dark and thickness of the wood. The foresters identified one of the men as Gervais of Dene in Bedford, who had been a cook, but was now part of the household of Sir John of Crackenhall. Gervais seems to have been well known to the foresters since they reported that 'he is wont to do evil in the forest.'[140] The resolution shown by the foresters is noteworthy in this case, as is the account of the arrows that the poachers shot at them. These were collected and kept as evidence and are described as three barbed (*barbatas*) and three unbarbed (*genderatus*). The significance of these terms is discussed in chapter IX.

There was another 'shoot out' in the same year in a forest in Northamptonshire when a group of foresters and hunters came upon twelve men armed with bows and arrows in the forest. The foresters exchanged arrowshot with the men but were unable to withstand them so they escaped. There is no evidence from the court account as to whether the foresters had identified members of the armed group or not, but even after the Forest Charter limited their powers, they were still able to search houses within the area to try to discover the malefactors. In these investigations they discovered a bow with a string and twenty Welsh arrows in the house of Nicholas of Carlby.[141] This is an uncommonly large number of arrows for one man to have in comparison with the numbers of arrows found in reports of other incidents.

Two more cases found in the records of the Northamptonshire Eyre of 1255 show that violence was just part of the foresters' job. In one William Wentre and Elias of Stretford, both walking foresters, saw three men including one on horseback. The horseman fled as soon as he saw the foresters. William shot an arrow at him which caused him to drop a sack covered in blood and hair.[142] In the second a man called Thomas, who doesn't seem to have been part of the household of any of the foresters, saw an archer (*architenentem*) with a bow and arrows and a servant with a deer they had shot. The man made to shoot at Thomas, so he fled. Later the foresters were lying in wait to see if anyone came into Geddington with venison. They caught a servant, Hugh Kydelomb of Geddington with four shoulders and two necks of venison. Hugh claimed that some men with bows that he didn't know had given it to him.[143] This cheeky excuse did not impress the foresters. The foresters also saw William of Warmington come into town with a bow and arrows and a page on horseback carrying venison.

In 1262, Symon de Beaumes, a forester of Kinver, saw two men kill a stag. He followed them until one of them killed his horse and so they escaped. However, because Symon could identify them, the survivor (one had died in the meanwhile) was presented before the Justices of the Forest Eyre.

In 1266 two of the foresters of Cannock came upon Thomas of Bromlegh in the park at Teddeslegh Haye in the forest. He was known as 'a very frequent malefactor of venison, and often indicted for such transgressions in the king's forests in the counties of Stafford and Salop'. Since he was carrying a bow and arrows they challenged him but he took cover in an oak tree and shot arrows at them until they were able to lay hands on him. He was imprisoned. An idea of his standing in his community can be found in another part of the same record which notes that he was frequently received by John le Cauf of

Wolverhampton, who was well aware of his poaching. John was imprisoned as a result but was subsequently released because of his poverty.[144] Perhaps Thomas was another such poor man.

Occasionally there is a case where the poachers seem to have shown ostentatious contempt for the Forest Law. One such is recorded in the Northamptonshire Eyre of 1272.[145] A group of young men from the middling orders of society from around Lowick near Kettering went into the forest with bows and arrows. They shot three deer and put the head of a buck on a stake 'in great contempt of the lord king and his foresters.' When the foresters challenged them, the poachers shot at them 'against the peace of the lord king.' The foresters fled and raised the Hue and Cry for assistance. Despite the flagrant nature of their actions, there were no clear recorded judgements against the offenders. Similar contempt was shown to the royal foresters of Pickering Forest in a case noted earlier in the 1330s.

John le Hayer was another habitual poacher who preyed on the venison of the New Forests. In 1280, four years after he first appeared in the court records, Nicholas the Forester and Richard, son of Adam Prest were pursuing him for an offence against the venison, when John shot and killed Nicholas with a barbed arrow. Clearly by this time he was a serious poacher using barbed arrows because of their effectiveness, even though they were more expensive than plainer arrowheads. Yet the court record made it clear that John le Hayer was poor, noting that he was dead by the time of the court hearing and had no property.[146]

Despite Magna Carta and the Forest Charter royal foresters sometimes behaved as general law enforcement officers within the bounds of their forest, a matter which could cause grievance and dispute between the forest officers and Justices on the one hand and the Common Law officers and Justices on the other. However, sometimes they had little choice if they were going to discover the poachers. In the forest of Pickering in 1282 Richard Fox of Ebberston, a shepherd, reported to three foresters that robbers in the forest of Bykkerle were trying to steal his possessions. The foresters hurried there and found John of Kukewald, a known robber and Richard of Suthfeld. They summoned John 'to come to the king's peace', but he refused and shot an arrow which nearly killed one of them. They pursued him since he was notorious, wounded him (it not is specified whether they shot him or wounded him otherwise) and had him beheaded.[147] Besides being a known robber, John also offended against Forest Law by carrying a bow and arrows within the bounds of a royal forest, so the foresters had every right to challenge him on that ground. But it was his other offences which lead to his beheading. There is a clear implication of summary justice in this case.

In the following year, Radulf Cotterill went into Campana, the western third of the Peak Forest, hiding a bow and arrows from clear sight. This may suggest that he was using a shorter bow, as was not unusual in the thirteenth century. John Daniel, the Forester in Fee discovered him as he shot at a herd of deer and challenged him. Radulf shot two arrows at him in an unsuccessful attempt to escape.[148]

In 1287 John Hakenol was indicted for robbery before the Justices in York. Like John of Kukewald mentioned above he was a determined criminal as he was also known as a habitual poacher in the royal forest of Galtres. The foresters heard that he was poaching so they went to arrest him for his various offences. However, John fled, and the foresters pursued him to Sutton Undergaltres where they cornered him. He started shooting arrows at them so one of their number, David of Grenhou shot back and wounded him. He died in York Jail awaiting trial.[149]

In the last decade of the thirteenth century, the foresters of Brigstock Forest attempted to arrest four men they found within the forest. The men shot arrows at the foresters and managed to escape. One of the verderers gave evidence that the steward of Sir Nicholas of Bassingbourn might have been one of the poachers, but nothing came of his evidence.[150]

Edward I and his magnates were so concerned about the regularity with which poachers resisted arrest, that in 1293 he ordered that any ‘malefactors’ in the forest who resisted the Hue and Cry could be killed with legal impunity.[151] A move in the direction of reintroducing the death penalty for poaching in the royal forest in the confused circumstances that often seem to have occurred when poachers were caught red handed in the forest.

William Dale, his son Robert, and some other unidentified local men seem to have been habitual poachers. They were twice identified as poaching with bows, arrows and dogs in the forest of Pickering in 1307. In the second incident a forester caught them after they had taken a deer. They beat him, killed his dog and hung it up to show their defiance. The Dales were outlawed for non-attendance before the Justices, since the court couldn’t penalise them for assaulting a forest officer in their absence.[152]

In 1316 in the forest of Quernmore, which was part of the forest of Lancaster, there was a ‘shoot out’ between John of Balrigg, the Forester in Fee at Quernmore and John of Hornby junior. John of Hornby was obviously a skilled poacher since he was reported to have gone about half a league into the forest from the highway to a place ‘where transit and exit of animals were wont’ to shoot any animals that came along. Before he could, John of Balrigg came upon him and

called on him to surrender. Hornby refused and each shot at the other, apparently without effect, until Balrigg was able to take Hornby and imprison him to await the Earl of Lancaster's justice.[153]

Throughout the period, the forest officers seem to have regularly been able to identify wrongdoers in the forest, either because they knew the local men or because local people were prepared to identify poachers for them. Many men brought before the Justices were described as frequent offenders against the venison, which suggests that identifying poachers, and bringing them to court were two different matters. The records of the Northamptonshire Eyre of 1251 give an example of this problem. Two men were seen in Twywell wood with bows, arrows, two greyhounds and a mastiff. They caught a doe, whereupon eight men including one on horseback and carried the doe away. Later the foresters found the deer's entrails. This fits in with common hunting practice of cleaning deer as soon as possible, and, in this case has the added advantage of leaving some of the evidence of the crime in the forest. When the foresters investigated, several agricultural workers said that they saw William of Drayton pass by in a green tunic carrying a bow and arrows. They also saw two men who they could not identify also carrying bows and arrows.[154] In a second case, John Spigurnel, the riding forester of Brigstock Forest, and Robert Page, the keeper of Acwellsike, saw two men in the forest with bows and arrows. These men shot three arrows at John and Robert and escaped. They identified one of the malefactors as Dawe, son of Mabel of Sudborough, and suspected that the other was William of Drayton despite him being masked.[155] The description of William in the first case strongly suggests that he was almost professionally equipped for hunting, while his being masked in the second suggests that he made poaching his way of life. It is also clear that he had no scruples about trying to injure the forest officers when attempting to avoid capture.

As the first case involving William of Drayton shows there were occasions when the local population was prepared to help the foresters by identifying wrongdoers. But as the regular complaints about foresters being oppressive demonstrate, this help may not always have been willing. Another part of the legal system was the use of juries of local people who had a duty on oath to make known to the Justices those who they suspected of criminal activity. The records of the Northamptonshire Eyre of 1253 show how useful this could be. Men from the townships of Geddington, Oakley, Brigstock, Corby and Stanion were recorded as making the following findings. They suspected that Henry Newborn of Islip had been going into the Park of Brigstock and Farming Wood with a bow and arrows for three years. They also stated that Solomon of Oakley had done the same for the

same time and that Solomon knew many of the men who had gone into these woods to poach. The same records provide some proof of Solomon's knowledge of the local criminals in that they record him informing against some men who robbed a cart. Simon, son of Roger of Geddington was also accused by his neighbours of poaching in Brigstock Park with a bow and barbed arrows. Finally they accused James of Thurlbear of hunting in Brigstock Park with a pack of dogs and eighteen men armed with bows and arrows.[156] Is this James of Thurlbear the same man as the one recorded as a riding forester recorded at the Northamptonshire Eyre of 1255 when his brother was killed in an unsuccessful attempt to apprehend poachers? It is possible on three counts. Firstly the 1250s were a time when the King Henry III and his barons were struggling for political power, so, at a local level some men took advantage of royal property such as the forests because the king's power and administration was distracted. Secondly, the scale of James' alleged poaching in 1253 with both a pack of dogs and a large number of associates makes it sound more like hunting by a man of some local standing. Thirdly, whenever inquisitions were held into the administration of the royal forests in the thirteenth century, the forest officials were often charged with offences against both the venison and the vert.

Throughout the thirteenth century there is evidence that the forest officers, the foresters of various ranks and to a lesser degree the verderers and regarders, were particularly unpopular with the communities who lived within the bounds of the royal forest. In one case reported in the Northamptonshire Eyre of 1255 the foresters and verderers saw malefactors in the forest with bows and arrows, so they raised the Hue and Cry to apprehend the men. The town of Wadenhoe refused to join the Hue, and the offenders took refuge in the house of William, son of William the reaper. William was imprisoned for refusing to identify the men.[157]

Not all poachers were hard desperate men prepared to resist the forest officers with potentially lethal force. The records of the Surrey Eyre of 1270 include several cases where the poachers tried to conceal their identity by flight even when they outnumbered the foresters. In one case, five men who entered Guilford Park with bows and arrows fled when challenged by two parkers. In another case a group of men, including Alan the Forester, fled the same park when challenged by a parker. Alan redeemed himself with a fine while his companions were threatened with outlawry for non-attendance at court. In the third case four men fled from a buck which they had shot when challenged.[158]

Forest and Parks as a School of Archery

Archery used to hunt large and small animals and birds was one of the main demonstrations of popular archery in medieval England. Men, and some women, of all social groups hunted in medieval England. How much of their hunting was legal depended on their wealth and status: the king's hunting was preserved by Forest Law; the wealthy had their parks but the mass of the population had very limited access to legal hunting. However, they hunted for food regardless of Forest Law. So, what does this account of poaching tell us about the ownership and use of bows and arrows before the mid-fourteenth century? Firstly, although bows were used for illegal hunting throughout England, court records make it clear that they were not the most commonly used tools. Despite Forest Law demanding that all dogs living within the forest should be 'lawed', dogs appeared most frequently in cases of poaching. In a number of cases men armed with bows and arrows also used dogs. If the dogs used by these poachers were trained as recommended in the later medieval hunting treatises of Gaston Phoebus and Edward of Norwich, then they would not make as much noise as modern fox hounds do when hunting. Cases from four Forest Eyres, those for Exmoor, Forest of Dean, Northamptonshire and Surrey, held in the early 1270s show that bows and arrows were only occasionally used in poaching. Fifteen cases of illegal hunting were recorded by the Justices for Exmoor Forest, and bows and arrows were used in only three.[159] The records of the Northampton and Surrey Eyres also confirm the relative rarity of poachers using bows and arrows. Those recorded for the Forest of Dean show that the majority of cases of illegal hunting involved the use of dogs, variously described as dogs, hounds or mastiffs.[160] In a number of cases deer were caught with dogs alone. Stealthy poachers used nets and snares to catch deer as well as small game like hares and rabbits.

It may well be that the court records seriously under estimate the number of cases of illegal hunting with bows and arrows. The attachments before the Verderers (formal accusations rather court hearings) of Quernmore and Wyresdale Forest show that out of twenty-nine cases only two specifically mention the use of bows and arrows.[161] But the cause of the beast's death may not have been clear because a number of the attachments were made on the evidence of the possession of meat or hides. Court records regularly mention poachers removing just the edible portions of the deer from the forest, regardless of how they killed the deer. This follows the legitimate hunting practice of 'unmaking' the deer as part of the ritual of the hunt. As far as poachers were concerned it would be common sense only to take away the useful and valued parts of the deer, the bones and guts were just potential evidence against them. Peasant poachers, whose prime motivation was to gain food, knew full well the difficulty

of a certain kill using a bow against deer and preferred to use the more certain methods of the snare and the net. So a second reason why the ownership of bows and arrows by the rural population could be underestimated in the forest records becomes clear. Men might have owned bows but preferred to poach by other means. It is not realistic to be argue that they used snares and nets because they were less conspicuous than a bow since as some of the cases included in this chapter show, men carrying nets in particular were conspicuous to an observer. However, bows and arrows were used in knightly, noble and clerical hunting, both legal and illegal, because they would allow the exercise of skill and sportsmanship.

Birrell, in a study of poaching in the thirteenth century based on the records of forest justice in the forests of Cannock, Kinver, Rockingham and Dean suggests that while the middling and peasant classes both used bows and arrows to hunt, the middling orders were more likely to use them than other methods. Both classes might use dogs to assist the archers. Her conclusion in regard to the favoured methods of peasant poachers is more tentative, suggesting that they might have preferred more stealthy methods such as the snare or the net, but this was not a conclusive opinion.[162]

Another reason why bow use was under recorded was that offences against Forest Law were very simple when compared with those against Common Law. There was no legal way a man who was not a forest officer could have venison without express permission, so a detailed accusation telling how he got the venison was not necessary. This is very different from the demands of Common Law which required that accusations to be quite detailed and accurate. As a result in cases of assault or murder the court record often gives quite particular descriptions of the circumstances, the wound and even the equipment used. This is clearly demonstrated in the Justice records covering the New Forest between the 1240s and 1330s, where a number of cases of deer being shot were recorded, but without any mention of whether a bow or crossbow was used. As a result the prevalence of popular archery with the hand bow was slightly under recorded in this and other forests.

How efficient were bows and arrows for killing game? An important question since the main purpose of poaching was to gain food, although some poachers from the higher social classes seem to have been as interested in sport. While a lucky shot with a broad barbed arrow might damage the beast's heart or lungs enough that it dropped almost immediately in clear view, the best archer would be challenged to do this regularly in a forest against a moving deer. One graphic example of how hard it is to kill a deer with a bow and arrow was discovered during the excavations at the manor of Faccombe

Netherton in Hampshire. In a part of a pit dating to the second half of the twelfth century, archaeologists found a deer skull with a solidly made broadhead (Jessop H3 type) still stuck in it. Although the tip of the arrow penetrated the skull by 30mm, the wound was not considered to have been fatal.[163] But the hunt easily got their quarry since the deer must have been stunned at the very least and so was incapable of escaping. But if the archer was hunting illegally, quite possibly at night as several of the records make clear was the case, even tracking a wounded beast by a blood trail would be very difficult. A number of the records quoted above mention poachers chasing wounded deer and several show that the poachers lost their wounded prey. Sometimes in these cases the foresters were able to identify the archer from the arrow left in a dead beast. There is no suggestion in these cases that the arrows were made with any special materials. It most likely reflects the fact that many ordinary men made their own arrows in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries because there were fewer craftsmen fletchers. However, in these same centuries arrowheads developed to become more effective in the hunt. Use of barbed arrowheads increased in the thirteenth century.

One aspect of peasant poaching is the pure opportunism shown in foraging wounded game. It is clear from some cases, such as that of William of Hucklow in the Peak Forest noted above that even the best hunters lost track of both their hounds and their prey for a while. The reason for this is the difficulty of killing a red deer with one arrow. Court records from the thirteenth century for cases concerning many forests including Sherwood, Dean, Kinver and Rockingham record peasants benefitting from this difficulty.[164]

It is surprising that the crossbow doesn't seem to have been more frequently used by illegal hunters. The relatively high cost of a crossbow in comparison with that of even a high-quality hand bow is not the explanation, since there is plenty of evidence of poaching by men from the middling orders of medieval society, and by noble households. They did this for sport and probably in deliberate defiance of royal forests and Forest Law which they considered unreasonable. These men, both clerical and lay, could easily have afforded the crossbow which had several advantages over the hand bow for hunting, whether legal or illegal. A crossbow can be carried loaded and ready to shoot with minimum movement on the part of the hunter, whereas drawing a bow is a very obvious large movement. A crossbow, being smaller in spread than a large hand bow, is easier to use in a forest, and there are manuscript illustrations of them being used from a stalking horse. Throughout this period crossbows would probably be more powerful than all but the very best hand bows. But they seem not to have been used to any extent. There are six cases

recounted here where the group of poachers had a crossbow as well as hand bows. Maybe the crossbow was viewed as more of a military bow than one a man might have in his house in the British Isles throughout the Middle Ages. But the absence of crossbows in the records of poaching is a clear sign of a well-established tradition of popular archery in England and Wales using hand bows before the fourteenth century.

Accounts of poaching activities from the court records make it clear that all social classes hunted illegally. Some of the men found guilty may have hunted out of desperation since they were recorded as poor in the list of the penalties paid.[165]

For others the motivation may have varied, some poaching purely for sport and some more directly for food, but there is no evidence of men poaching for direct financial gain. There seems to have been a very limited commercial venison market in these centuries because for it to have been otherwise would only have encouraged poaching.[166] Sometimes the court records suggest that individuals poached as part of a group of local men who seem to have felt that the game in the extensive royal forests was too tempting a target. The court records of the forest of Lancaster for the last decade of the thirteenth century provide some evidence of the involvement of different social groups in illegal hunting, and the proportion of cases involving bows and arrows. Forty-six offences against the venison recorded in these years, the perpetrators included six lords of manors, three clerics, two freeholders, a forester, forty-three common men such as tanners and forge workers and one habitual malefactor.[167] What is clear is that common men poached, but in this count habitual poachers were rare (or skilled in that they hadn't been caught). It is also noticeable that a number of these men followed crafts which gave them access to the woodlands, tanners for bark and forge workers for charcoal. At the end of the thirteenth century at least half the rural population were regarded as serfs, being unfree in the sense of having to use their lord's court and not being able to leave their neighbourhood without permission.[168] This meant that there was a very strong tendency for peasant poachers to be at work in their immediate neighbourhoods which had some clear consequences. It might well have made it easier for forest officers to identify wrong doers. Also it was probably easier for peasant poachers, when they were brought before the court, to find the pledges necessary to avoid gaol from among their neighbours. This could have been encouraged by the tendency of peasant poachers to share the venison among a small group of people. Indeed the relatively frequent identification of peasant poachers as habitual malefactors suggests several factors were present. If the foresters knew that an individual was an habitual offender, why didn't they stop him

earlier? There is plenty of evidence throughout the period that the forest officers were often harshly determined to find evidence to enforce the Forest Law. Community support against the forest officers was undoubtedly a factor, as was apathy on the part of the forest officers until the approach of the Justices of the Forest Eyre made them more determined to have offenders to present. Also, as has been commented on elsewhere in this book, accusations before the Justices could be framed in quite melodramatic terms in an attempt to influence the proceedings. The accusation of being an habitual offender would be a significant attempt by the forest officers to damage the standing of the accused in the court. In contrast the more mobile knightly, noble and clerical poachers often seemed to engage in illegal hunting as part of their travels.

Evidence of the administration of Forest Law by the foresters becoming ineffective might be found in the records of the Forest Eyre for the forest of Pickering in the 1330s. This Eyre took place after a period of significant disorder in the kingdom of England. Edward II's reign was disrupted by long-running disputes between the king and his favourites on the one hand and the barons on the other. Eventually by the mid to late 1320s Edward had even driven Queen Isabella herself to revolt. This was compounded in the north of England by regular incursions by the Scots under Robert the Bruce, resurgent after their great victory at Bannockburn. These circumstances may have made it very difficult for the foresters to implement all the demands of Forest Law on the people living within and around the forest of Pickering.

It is very difficult to suggest convincingly that there was more illegal hunting in one forest than another at any given time, but, it seems clear that illegal hunting increased in the thirteenth century. It is likely that the use of dogs and hounds are also increased as part of this increase in poaching. This suggests that the foresters were becoming less efficient in ensuring that all dogs within the area of the forest were being lawed, that is maimed in one front foot as required by Forest Law.

But, after Magna Carta and the Forest Charter reduced the penalties for poaching and the powers of the royal foresters, medieval poachers seem to have felt that their chances of being undetected while actually hunting, or being able to escape if noticed, were good enough that many of them don't seem to have been especially stealthy. But the real significance of the two Charters was that they forbad maiming and the death penalty for poaching. Men could hone their archery skills in repeated poaching forays without fear of these physical penalties. Also the opportunities for poaching grew with the great increase in the number of private parks in the thirteenth century. As was noted

above, these were not as well defended as the royal forests, and they provided a significant stimulus to the development of archery skills for both legal and illegal hunting. Firstly the size of many of the parks, and the fact that they commonly held fallow deer encouraged bow and stable hunting rather than par force hunting. Many of the parks were just not big enough for any worthwhile skilled pursuit of a selected deer with hounds. Fallow deer, unlike red deer, which were the preserve of the kings of England, have poor stamina and tend to stick together in a herd in flight, both factors which make them unsuitable for par force hunting.[169] Secondly, as a result of the restrictions these two circumstances put on the hunting available in the parks, there were more employment opportunities requiring archery skills as parkers and huntsmen in the households of the park owners. This is all the more likely because there is very limited evidence for seigneurial hunting, that is hunting by park owners themselves.[170] Thirdly, those factors which encouraged the use of bows in hunting by the park owners and their households could also encourage poachers to use them. Another way in which the creation of a large number of private parks encouraged illegal hunting, whether with a bow or not, was the resentment felt by the local population who lost both arable plots and traditional rights of access to land for seasonal pasturage, collecting fodder or firewood and even limited hunting of small birds and animals. As Mileson puts it in his study of the medieval park: 'Parks represented an affront to traditional peasant hunting activity, since hunting was actually practised at all social levels.'[171]

Without overstating the matter it is fair to say that in thirteenth-century England, the increasing number of men involved in protecting forests and parks against the rising number of men taking advantage of the increased opportunities to poach were together members of a great school of archery. English armies in the first half of the fourteenth century made good use of the skills developed in this way. But it wasn't only archery skills that were developed in the forest and parks. Foresters and poachers developed skills of observation through watching for signs of each other and watching the deer to learn their habits. Foresters and habitual poachers also seem to have often got over mankind's general reluctance to use potentially lethal violence against other men through their preparedness to shoot at each other.[172] So all in all, the informal warfare in medieval England's forests and parks in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries trained men to be skilled and effective military archers in the armies of the kings of England.

Notes

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VIII

Military Archery before Edward III

How mighty were military archers valued in medieval Western Europe before the English armies of Edward III's reign demonstrated that massed archery from simple powerful longbows could be a battle winning tactic? A question complicated by regular use of bodies of crossbowmen in all countries of medieval Europe including England. William of Normandy's victory in the Battle of Hastings is often held up as an early example of the value of substantial bodies of archers. But the real lesson from Hastings was the value of the controlled use of the three arms of a medieval army, cavalry, infantry and missile troops, rather than that archers were battle winners. It is now generally agreed that the long-standing legend of Harold Godwinson being fatally wounded by an arrow is wrong and that he was cut down by a group of cavalry who broke through the depleted English shield wall. They achieved this because of the losses suffered by the English under the onslaught of repeated attacks by infantry, cavalry and archery one after the other throughout the long day of battle, and the lack of discipline among some of the English troops who were lured out of the shield wall by retreats made by the Normans, whether feigned or real. William's archers were a mix of professionals, mercenaries hired to build up his army, and levies from his Dukedom. William of Normandy had been engaged in regular warfare as he grew into manhood after his accession to the Dukedom as a child in 1035, and this continued as he consolidated his hold on Normandy and expanded it at his neighbours' expense, until he finally resolved to assault the kingdom of England. As a result, it is likely that the levies he raised had gained much more experience of war than some of their opponents at Hastings.

As will become clear below, the Battle of the Standard in 1138 has a much stronger claim to being the first battle where archers were a battle winning force. Also it is the first time that something like the famed English tactical system was used; with the battle line made up

of knights and men at arms fighting on foot standing in solid defensive blocks (later known as battles) supporting (and being supported by) large numbers of archers. But the status of military archers at this time was probably even lower than that of the infantry in general because they used missile weapons rather than fighting man to man. Pope Innocent II led the 2nd Lateran Council in 1139 to decree that the use of crossbowmen and archers against Christians and Catholics was hateful to God and forbidden under pain of anathema.[1] This was not just an attack on military archery, but was part of a determined effort by the Church to limit the fatal consequences of warfare between Christians, with the concept of the Truce of God being extended. Even practice for warfare in jousts and tournaments was forbidden if it endangered life. In this context the prohibition might be taken as evidence of the effectiveness of crossbowmen and archers against the armour of the time.

The armour of the eleventh and twelfth century, a hauberk of mail over a quilted coat was protection against arrows, both Henry I and Henry II were living proof of this.[2] But Giraldus Cambrensis's account of the warfare between the Anglo Normans and the Welsh in the early 1180s provides the most graphic record of the effectiveness of the Welsh archers. He reports of William de Braose, a tough experienced Marcher baron, that he:

> … also testifies that … one of his men at arms was struck by an arrow shot at him by a Welshman. It went right through his thigh, high up, where it was protected outside and inside the leg by his mail chausses [chainmail leggings], and then through the skirt of his leather tunic: next it penetrated that part of the saddle which is called the alva or seat; and finally it lodged in his horse, driving in so deep that it killed the animal.[3]

Archers also presented an opportunist threat to mailed knights; Geoffrey de Mandeville took off his helmet when he went to look over Burwell Castle in preparation for an assault and was fatally wounded in the head in 1144.[4]

The feudal system imposed on England by the Norman kings had the prime purpose of providing the king with fighting men in return for the grant of lands to support them. It concentrated on providing mailed horsemen, infantry being raised using a modified Fyrd system, the Anglo-Saxon militia system that the Normans inherited, or buy hiring mercenaries. From the late twelfth century onwards the Assizes of Arms set out standards of equipment that men should own depending on the value of their lands and goods. The Assizes became particularly important in the encouragement of the development of well-prepared infantry, particularly archers. But some archers were

raised through the feudal system.

Feudal Archers

These men held land directly from the king for service in person as an archer, although as time passed it became acceptable to provide the service of substitute as an archer. Not all service as an archer was military service, examples of men being required to serve as foresters have been noted elsewhere. The majority of those owing service as military archers lived in areas of persistent military activity, particularly the Welsh Marches, more rarely the Northern Marches, although some lived in more peaceful areas. One such was Nicholas of Hale, who at his death in 1250, held one virgate or approximately 30 acres in Hale, Northamptonshire by serjeantry of archery.[5] This land holding was enough for Nicholas to be among the upper tiers of the rural peasantry in terms of wealth, but in no sense was it sufficient to make him a member of the gentry or knightly class. Holding the land by serjeantry meant that Nicholas was a free man. A contrasting example is a tenure that reflects the demands made to keep the Welsh at bay. When Isabel le Broc died in 1256, an inquisition recorded that she held the manor of Chetleton in Shropshire for finding one man with a bow and arrows to go with the king to North Wales when necessary.[6] Isabel's economic status was higher than Nicholas, so it may not have been just her gender that meant that personal service was not required. The precise location of where the duty is to be served, North Wales, reflects the difficulties Henry III faced in his relations with Llewelyn ap Gruffydd, Prince of Wales, whose stronghold was North Wales. Unusually for feudal military service this archer served when necessary, with no specification of how long or indeed how frequent his service might be. Another Shropshire landholder owed a heavier service, that of finding two serjeants one with a lance the other with arrows (no mention of a bow curiously enough), but only for the normal feudal service of forty days.[7]

The Archers of Sibertoft and Stoke Archer

The lives and duties of a family of Archers can be glimpsed through several generations in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Robert the Archer held Sibertoft (spelled Sybercroft) in Northamptonshire in the latter part of Henry III's reign for the service of providing a serjeant with a bow and arrows to serve in the king's army for forty days at Robert's expense.[8] A serjeant was a free man possibly with some protective clothing such as a gambeson. It is probable given Robert's name that this was an alteration of the original service due,

with Robert being allowed to send an archer instead of serving in person as was required in other records. In 1274 Nicholas the Archer made a legal complaint that the land he had a right to in Sibertoft was in fact being held 'in the king's hand', possibly as result of Robert's death. His claim was that he held this land 'by serjeantry of bearing the king's bow with the king through all the forests of England.'[9] This was substantial change in the terms of the landholding, Nicholas claiming that his tenure was for hunting-related activity. It is not clear whether he was claiming that he was the king's bow bearer, an actual post in the royal administration, or that he carried a bow supplied by the king as a huntsman. The latter is perhaps more likely because when Nicholas was summoned in 1277 it was to a carry the King's bow for forty days' service in Wales for his lands in Northamptonshire. So at this date Nicholas of Northamptonshire seemed to owe service in both peace and war, although this is the only reference to forest service connected to Sibertoft. The term 'carry the king's bow' suggests that as a select professional archer the king provided a suitable bow. By 1284 Nicholas held this land on the same terms under Edward I. In 1277 Nicholas Le Archer also received a summons relating to his lands in at Stoke in Gloucestershire requiring him to provide an archer and 25 arrows.[10] In another record this landholding was for his own service 'carrying one bow with arrows' in the king's army.[11] Nicholas the Archer of Stoke in Gloucestershire may be a different landholder but that seems unlikely. Obviously if the two Nicholas' are one and the same man then he could only provide personal service for one landholding, and it seems that he paid personal service for Sibertoft as an archer and provided an archer for Stoke as the 1277 summons required. By 1313–14 the terms of service owed for holding 80 acres at Stoke Archer in Gloucestershire had changed. An Inquisition held into the landholdings of Edmund le Archer recorded that the service was now the feudal norm of finding an archer for 40 days for service 'in the king's wars within the four seas of England.'[12] The landholding had taken the family's occupational name by this time but the terms had eased slightly since personal service as an archer was no longer required. As a result there is no certainty that Edmund was a practising archer as has ancestors had been.

This landholding continued to be held for an archer's service. By 1317–18 the landholding at Sibertoft had been granted to Thomas, son of William Curzon for the service of an archer in the king's army for forty days.[13] The terms had changed in recognition that the landowner himself might not be able (or willing) to serve as an archer, and the length of service was the conventional feudal term. However, the land holding at Stoke in Gloucestershire, later recorded as

Archerstoke, remained in the Archer family until 1350 at least. In that year Geoffrey le Archer died and his portion of the manor went to his daughter who was married to a local knight, and indication perhaps of the Archer family's social status by this time. The service required for this holding was an archer's service in war for forty days.[14]

The writs summoning men who owed feudal military service to Edward I's army invading Wales in 1277 mainly refer to knights and horsemen, but there are a few requiring archers' service. These include: Hugh of Chibault living in (South)Hampshire who had to provide an archer; Robert Russell of Gloucestershire an archer and twenty-five arrows; Walter of Stoke (South)Hampshire an archer with an arrow; Richard le Chapetier of Dorset an archer with a bow without a string and a bolt without fletches; Richard le Curteys of Oxfordshire a 'garcon' (a servant) with a bow and twenty-five arrows; Edward Moton who seems to have been a subtenant of Nicholas Le Archer of Gloucestershire owed a foot archer and finally someone who cannot be identified because of the state of the manuscripts, who was to provide an archer with a bow, two arrows and a bolt.[15] Some of these are services that have already been identified through inquisitions. However, in some cases more information is provided, most noticeably the three archers who are summoned with 25 arrows, enough to make an effective contribution to the campaign. The archer from Dorset with a bow without a string and a bolt without fletches may have come from an area of royal forest, since there were still a number of forests in the county in the thirteenth century. The seemingly useless equipment could arise from the terms of the service for the landholding being framed to reflect the restrictions placed on the ownership of bows and arrows in forest areas. But, even allowing for the limited survival of records, the men who owed feudal military service as archers represent a tiny proportion of the foot archers in Edward I's army of 1277. Morris estimates that there were nearly 2,600 infantry ready to serve in the middle of July, and that this number had increased to over 15,600 men by the end of August.[16] These men were a mix of archers, crossbowmen and other infantry, with the archers making up a substantial minority. The archers included elite groups such as the 100 archers from Macclesfield Forest attached to Edward's household as well as ordinary county levies. Archers continued to be part of the king's household, often as part of a bodyguard, throughout the period of the Welsh wars, with twenty-five being listed in 1295.[17]

Writs issued at other dates list other men who owed archers as service for their landholdings. The following examples all come from 1284–6, mainly to meet the demands of Edward I's Welsh wars, and

all but the first example lived in the Marches. Radulf of Stopham held Brianston in Dorset for providing one man with a bow *without a string* for the king's army. The following all come from Shropshire: Richard of Holicote held land at Faintre for providing one man with a bow and three arrows for the king's army in Wales; Roger Corbet held the manor of Chetlington on the same terms; John, son of Aeri held Haverkercote for providing one man with a bow and three arrows; Robert Body held part of Stocton for the service of one man with a bow and four arrows for forty days, the normal period of feudal military service.[18]

The number of arrows each man was expected to bring is noteworthy. In some cases it compared with the requirements placed on archers in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries who were expected to bring a full sheaf of twenty-four. In other cases the requirement was to have a very small numbers of arrows which seems to limit their usefulness in the light of the scarcity of evidence for the king regularly providing his archers with arrows at this time. While the majority of these examples come from the Marches it is clear that Edward I expected competent archers to be available from other areas of his kingdom as well.

A number of landholders who held lands outside the Marches for archers' service in Henry III's and Edward I's reigns. Robert of Eleford held various lands in Oxfordshire, including a fairly large holding of three virgates at Eston. By 1293 he had to find an archer for forty days service at his own expense in the king's army in England and Wales. But by 1328 a second Robert of Eleford held similar land for the service of an unarmoured archer for forty days' service 'in any war of the king within his realm.'[19] While it is risky to draw too many conclusions from a single record, the terms of the later Inquisition record may reflect changes made in Edward II's reign. The specification of an unarmoured archer contrasts with the terms of many of the records of the second half of Edward II's reign wherein infantry men both archers and others are required to have an 'aketon' (padded jacket) a helmet and often armoured gauntlets.[20] The mention of service 'in any war of the king within his realm' reflects changes in where this sort of feudal service may be necessary. Firstly it suggest that Robert's man could only be summoned for defensive wars, 'any war of the king *within* his realm'. So he was spared service in any aggressive campaigns against the Scots since Edward seems to have accepted the independence of Scotland in the terms of the Truce of Bishopsthorpe.[21] Secondly, perhaps a sign of the value of English military archers being appreciated, Edward was able to employ Robert in his wars to defend his realm in Aquitaine. The terms of the service owed for many more landholdings do not seem to have changed with

the changing military situation. In 1294 Rose Trussell held Cubblesdon in Staffordshire for the service of finding an archer for the garrison at Tyrley Castle, near Market Drayton, in times of war between England and Wales.[22] By Edward II's and Edward III's reigns, landholdings as widely scattered as Upton St Leonard, Gloucestershire, Wolverston near Southampton, Watton in Hertfordshire and Estwode in Essex were held for the service of finding an archer for forty days' service in the king's army in Wales.[23]

While most of the records of lands held for archer's service relate to the king of England's wars in Wales, there is one example from Yorkshire that reminds us of the importance of local archers to the defence of the North against the Scots. Accounts of the Battle of the Standard in 1138 and the Battle of Neville's Cross in 1346 make clear the important role the local archers played in these major victories. An inquest of 1345 records that John Larcher held lands at Yapum in Yorkshire for providing a man with a bow and arrows to serve for forty days at York Castle. He was succeeded by his wife Cecily and his son John who was 21 at the time. Cecily died in 1347, and John was named her heir. John the younger died in 1349, his heir being his four-year-old son, Thomas. As a result the landholding seems to have gone out of the family since the death of Remigius of Creppyng who held this messuage in Yapum for the same service is recorded in 1350.[24] This is another example of where the family name (Larcher = Le Archer) suggests that John's ancestor who first gained the landholding did so because of his archery skill. While the deaths of John the elder and his wife Cecily can probably be put down to life circumstances in fourteenth century England, the deaths of John the Younger and Remigius fall into the timespan of the Black Death and may well be a tiny snapshot of the rapid local mortality that dreadful pestilence brought about. There is no evidence of what happened to young Thomas.

Another record of a landholdings held for forty days' service by an archer in time of war in Yorkshire is in the inquisition held in 1351 on the death of Auketin Salvayn who owed the sixth part of such a service for a holding at Northallerton.[25] The fragmentation of landholdings led to the commutation of the service to a cash payment. This, and the development of the practice of sending substitutes for service whether military or as foresters, created more opportunities for work for hireling archers. How professional and competent these were is uncertain since there were regular complaints from Edward I's reign onwards about the quality of some of the men turning up in answer to summons from the king. But these developments in military service provided opportunities for men to become professional soldiers whether as archers or men at arms.

Landholdings that were required to provide an archer for military service, whether for the king's army or for garrison service, are never more than a small proportion of those for which military service by serjeants or ordinary men was required. In the inquisition records for the last twenty years of Henry III's reign only nine records mentioned the provision of military service by ordinary men, and of these only three were for archers, one of which was specifically a crossbowman. In the same period only one of the seven serjeants required was to be an archer.

More puzzling are the examples where the military archer's service required for a land holding seems to be symbolic, possibly reflecting some lost custom. The most straightforward was John, son of Aer who held Haverscote in Shropshire until his death in 1293 for the service of a man with a bow and three arrows in Wales when there was war. The man was to stay with the king's army until he had shot his three arrows at the king's enemies.[26] The inquisition record of 1313–14 gives more detail of the terms of this land holding. The service is that of finding a man with a bow, two arrows and a bolt (*petulio*) for the king's army in Wales. The man 'on seeing the king's enemies shall shoot his arrows at them and straightaway return home with his bow and the bolt.'[27] The inquisition of 1349 has yet another version of the service required for Haverscote. The provision of a man with a bow and two arrows in time of war in Wales until the man has shot one of his arrows 'against the van of the Welsh army.'[28] In 1308/9 a messuage at Leton in Shropshire was held in 'serjeantry of finding a man with a bow three blunt arrows (*pilettis*, a word commonly used to mean bird-bolts) not feathered for the guard of the castle at Shrewsbury for forty days whenever there shall be war between the King and the Prince of Wales at his own charge, and after the forty days he shall shoot his arrows into three parts of the castle and withdraw unless the king wants to retain him at his own cost.'[29] These terms were obsolete. The title of Prince of Wales had been held Edward II himself before he ascended the throne, since the last welsh Prince of Wales, Llewelyn had been killed in 1282. It is difficult to see the purpose of the man having unfletched blunts. An inquisition held in 1325–6 records that Alan de Bokeshull held Brianston Manor in Dorset by serjeantry for the service of footman with a bow without a cord and an unfletched shaft in the king's army in Wales.[30]There was no mention of the unfletched shaft in the earlier mention of this bizarre servise in 1284. In 1342 Hugh de Grey was recorded as having held the manor of Waterhall in Buckinghamshire for the service 'of finding a man on a horse without a saddle [valued at 40*d*], a bow without a string and an arrow without a head in his army when the king shall order.'[31] It is difficult to fathom the thinking behind the

requirement of the service of these particularly useless men.

Before the Hundred Years War

Even before the tactical developments of the fourteenth century, some English counties could provide the king with significant numbers of archers. The bodies of archers raised in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries were used as auxiliaries with four main functions: to support and protect spear-armed infantry; to suppress enemy missile troops; to break up enemy formations such as blocks of pike-armed infantry and to weaken the enemy so that the mailed cavalry of knights and men at arms could charge effectively. This last role was particularly clear in Edward I's Welsh and Scottish wars. In these wars, the charge of mailed cavalry was still considered *the* battle winning tactic, a piece of tactical wisdom that had been overturned by his grandson's reign since Edward III's armies won their victories fighting as infantry.

The major threat archers presented to the mailed knight in the eleventh and twelfth centuries was that they could neutralize them by shooting the knight's horses, as happened at the Battle of Bourgtheroulde in 1124. The limited accounts of this battle mention no important casualties; Henry I's archers just crippled the knights in the Norman army supporting William Clito by dismounting them. The success of the archers made an important contribution to Henry's victory since it restricted the ability of William Clito's army to make or resist a cavalry charge, the main battle tactic of the period. The lack of any mention of significant human casualties in this battle may suggest that the bows used were relatively light compared say with those used by the Welsh against Anglo Norman invaders since the mail and quilted coats worn by Clito's men seem to have kept the arrows out, whereas Welsh arrows could penetrate mail according to contemporary accounts.

Archers are often mentioned in the accounts of the fighting that took place in much of King Stephen's reign between 1136 and 1154. In 1142 Stephen brought his army to Oxford to confront his opponent, the Empress Matilda. Her army, which may not have been as big as Stephen's, stood on one side of the river and challenged Stephen's army on the other side. Her archers were particularly provoking 'and some were doing very grievous harm to his men from the other side of the river by vigorous archery.'[32] Stephen, who was always a brave and decisive military leader whatever his failings as a king, led a charge across the river that scattered Matilda's army so that she was penned into Oxford Castle. This led to her famous escape across the fields in the snow wearing a white cloak. We don't know where the fight across the river took place. Two rivers meet at Oxford, the Cherwell and the

Thames, and neither would have been especially wide in the Middle Ages even allowing for the extensive marshy areas that have now been drained. As a result there is no need to suppose that the archers were using bows with a heavy draw weight to harass the army on the opposite bank. The archers were unable to hinder Stephen's charge across the river, possibly because they were in the wrong position, but also because their bows were not powerful enough to have much effect on mailed horsemen. Even in the heyday of the warbow in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries there were a number of battles where, if the archers didn't have protection from hedges or stakes, they couldn't repel a cavalry charge. Two years later Stephen used archers in a very traditional way at his siege of Winchcomb. He ordered the archers to advance 'shooting arrows thickly' to cover the men who were crawling up the castle mound to storm the castle.[33] Evidence of the finds of arrowheads from the twelfth century which shows the size and type of head in common use can be found in chapter IX. This enables some conclusions to be made about the likely maximum draw weight of bows at the time.

The fighting in Wales in the same period was very different from that on the Continent and in the civil wars of Stephen's reign since the bow was a very common weapon for one side, the Welsh. No doubt in response to the archery of the Welsh, the Anglo Norman forces seem to have included a higher proportion of archers. In 1136 Baldwin Fitz Gilbert led a force of 500 knights and archers into Brecon.[34] The force that Henry II led against Owain Gwynedd in 1157 with the support of some of Owain's Welsh rivals including Madog ap Meredudd Prince of Powys included a 'missile arm that consisted of archers from the Shropshire borders commanded by the Sheriff.'[35] It is often suggested that the development of archery skills by these English border archers was influenced by their Welsh neighbours and enemies.

But men practised archery in war in other parts of England. In 1173 the men of Dunwich showed that they had bows and arrows enough to defend themselves. The Earls of Leicester and Norfolk were in rebellion against Henry II and made an attempt to take this important port. Jordan Fantosme in his contemporary chronicle notes that the Dunwich men 'issued forth to their defences, each knowing his job; some to use bows, others to throw spears and the women to bring up stones.'[36]

Ten archers were part of the garrison of Gloucester Castle in 1173.[37] The record makes no mention of their nationality, but it is reasonable to assume that they were English or Welsh, since by this time some southern Welsh were perfectly willing to serve the English kings and nobles. But the uncertainty of relations between the English and Welsh later in the period is hinted at when in 1229 two barrels full of

arrows were delivered to Gloucester Castle.[38]

Richard I comes down in history as a skilled and valiant knight, and more importantly a very skilful commander. His great battle at Arsouf in 1191 against Saladin demonstrated he understood the value of good infantry and missile troops. He used spearmen and crossbowmen working together to keep Saladin's cavalry and mounted archers at bay, in a way that is reminiscent of the way musketeers and pikemen worked in the seventeenth century.[39] But there is little evidence in accounts of the Third Crusade or his wars in France that he made much use of archers. This is not surprising since he learnt his military skills in France, and placed high value on professionalism. Archers were not commonly used in French military practice in the twelfth century, despite William of Normandy's success, and I have found no evidence of bodies of professional archers to rival the professional crossbowmen that certainly existed by the thirteenth century in French warfare. Also, it is very unlikely that the commonly available hand bow could compete with the impact power of the crossbow at this time.

However, his younger brother John, who was much less militarily successful than Richard, did employ numbers of archers. In one of the invasion scares of his reign, King John summoned all landholders of whatever rank to Dover. Once they had arrived, he dismissed the poorly armed infantry levies but kept the knights, freemen archers and crossbowmen.[40] While there may well have been some financial considerations in this move he was also concerned to keep an effective force. In 1214 when he was desperately planning some sort of response to Philip Augustus' military successes in France, he ordered 300 Welsh archers be raised for his army.[41] But the ordinary archers of the time who really showed their effectiveness were those led by William of Cassingham, otherwise known as Willikin of the Weald. William took his name from his manor in Kent, but it is not clear that he was a knight. Whatever his status, in 1216 he gathered together a band of the men of the Weald and the surrounding countryside to wage very successful guerrilla war against the invading French under Louis the Dauphin of France. His men, who were mainly archers, ambushed and harassed the French at every opportunity for two years.[42]

By the thirteenth century archers seem to have become valued as part of garrisons for castles and even monasteries. In 1235, the Abbott and monks of Holme Cultram, a Cistercian house in Cumberland, were given licence to have serjeants (in this context hired full-time fighting men) armed with bows and arrows 'to protect their granges and the bodies of the bretheren dwelling therein'. This was for a limited period of just over a year until Christmas 1236, and only applied to

the granges outside the neighbouring royal forest.[43] This last restriction again demonstrates that considerations of the royal forests overcame concerns about the protection of other men's lives and property whether lay or clerical. The important point is that at this early date, skilled military archers were available for hire in the North of England at least.

The significance of Henry III's increasing emphasis on archers in his Assizes of Arms is discussed elsewhere. Evidence of the military consequences begins to appear in later part of his reign. In 1257 the Sheriff of Sussex was instructed to send 100 good archers with all speed to the king at Chester and these were to be prepared to go with the king into Wales. The sheriff was also to give them twenty days' pay at 2*d* per day.[44] This seems a risky idea, and it is unusual throughout the Middle Ages for significant amounts of wages to be given to men before muster. In 1264 an order was sent to the whole commonality of Norfolk and Suffolk that they were to stand ready to repel an invasion by aliens. The Sheriff was ordered to enforce this request; 'he is to have prepared in every township according to its size, the best men, mounted and on foot with lances, bows and arrows, crossbows and axes.'[45] The Sheriff was also instructed to accept no excuses from men trying to avoid service, not even the need to gather the harvest which had in other circumstances been accepted. With the exception of crossbows, the weapons mentioned in this order reflect those expected of the lower income groups in the Assize of Arms.

The archers of the Weald played their part in the fighting between Henry III and the Barons. In 1264 they declined a summons to join the king's forces and harassed his men as they travelled through the Wealden Forest. As a result of this Henry, showing a ruthlessness that was unusual for him, had over 300 beheaded for treason. Whether this royal ruthlessness made the Wealden archers rethink their loyalties, or whether they just knew which way the wind was blowing, they supported the king for the next three years. In 1266 John de Warenne, Earl of Surrey had taken a force of 300 archers to Essex 'to vex the king's enemies there'.[46] The Sheriff of Sussex was to pay de Warenne £70 from the revenues of his county to pay the wages of these men. Another police action in the aftermath of the baronial rebellion lead by Simon de Montfort was carried out in the North in 1269. The Sheriff of York was granted money to pay the wages (at unspecified daily rates) of knights, crossbowmen both mounted and unmounted and foot archers who had been employed chasing rebels.[47]

The English armies in the Welsh campaigns of 1277 included 1,000 infantry, mixed archers and spearmen, from Cheshire, 640 similar troops from Shropshire and 120 archers from Lancashire.[48] Later

summons were often frustratingly vague about the type of infantry summoned, and Edward I's complaints centred more on the infantry's tendency to desert than on the quality of their equipment. His complaints about quality of equipment carried by feudally levied troops applied more to men at arms and knights. However, the accounts rolls for the wages actually paid to the infantry are often more precise. Those that survive for Edward I's war against the Welsh in 1277 record the majority of the foot as archers, the rest being spear or pike men.[49] The archers no doubt included men from South Wales as well as Englishmen. Increasingly the accounts for the Scottish wars referred to the infantry as archers when they specified their role.[50]

Edward summoned large numbers of infantry for his 1297 campaign in Scotland: Northumberland was to provide 1,000, Yorkshire 4,000, Nottingham and Derbyshire 1,000, Lancashire 3,000, Cumberland 5,000, Westmoreland 3,000, Shropshire and Staffordshire 3,000, Worcestershire 1,000 and Gloucestershire 2,000, a total of 23,000 men. Another set of summons that overlapped in timescale with those above asked for 2,000 men from North Wales, 4,000 from Cheshire and 400 from the Marcher lordship of Bromfield. Other writs for this same campaign asked for another 10,500 Welshmen and another 200 from Lancashire.[51] Inevitably not all these men arrived in time for the campaign, indeed not all of them turned up. The rolls recording wages paid to the infantry actually on campaign and probably present at the Battle of Falkirk suggest that there were about 14,800 Englishmen (a figure that included some Irish troops) and about 10,500 Welshmen.[52] Comparing this with the figures in the writs of summons, it is clear the Welsh were more enthusiastic about a summer's campaign in Scotland than the English! The warlike enthusiasm of the Welsh was one of the great gains from his conquest of Wales for Edward I; they often made up a majority of the men who actually went on campaign, as was the case in some of the campaigns in Aquitaine in 1294–8 and in Flanders in 1297/8.[53]

Edward's military practice is significant because he understood the importance of infantry both archers and those armed with other weapons; he knew he needed them to control territory, to forage, to pursue the enemy in difficult country, even, as the Battle of Falkirk demonstrated, deal with difficult infantry, but he did not regard them as battle winners. That role remained with the knights and men at arms. There is evidence that the Scots felt the same, and that it was the heavy cavalry that they feared. But, there is also evidence that Edward underestimated the abilities of his infantry. When he was campaigning in Galloway in 1300 he came upon the Scots holding the opposite bank of an estuary. He was reluctant to engage the Scots, probably thinking in traditional terms that it was not a good risk to

send his cavalry across the estuary to try to force the Scots back. However, the infantry engaged the Scots, and when Edward sent someone into the water to recall them, the mounted troops misunderstood and charged across, ensuring the English success.[54] There is no evidence in the surviving accounts that the infantry were predominantly archers, who forced the crossing with a hail of arrows, as happened on occasion in Edward III's campaigns in France, although it is likely on the evidence of the surviving writs of military summons that a good number were archers. Their slightly ill-disciplined enthusiasm is reminiscent of the archers' contribution to the storming of Caen in 1346.

Although Edward I understood the importance of infantry, he had no particularly high opinion of the English and Welsh infantry he raised in such large numbers in comparison with the Gascon infantry which he used in much smaller numbers in campaigns in Wales and Southern France. The majority of the Gascon infantry who fought in Wales seem to have been specialist crossbowmen. The surviving records for Edward I's 1282 campaigns list 585 Gascon crossbowmen, the majority of whom were mounted while less than half that number of English crossbowmen appear.[55] The surviving records of the English and Welsh infantry who went to Aquitaine in the 1290s are not always clear about their weaponry. It is reasonable to assume that, like the infantry raised for campaigns in Wales or Scotland, these infantry included a good number of archers. On one occasion, 1295, the surviving writs of summons are more specific. 3,000 infantry were to be provided from Dorset, Southamptonshire and Wiltshire, 'either archers or crossbowmen who were to be skilled and well equipped.'[56] But whichever type of bow they used, it is clear that they were not considered the equals of the Gascon infantry, since they were paid only one twelfth of the daily pay rate of knights, while the Gascon infantry received one eighth.[57] The Gascon infantry included a good number of crossbowmen. Probably more than the English levies. They were paid more than the English infantry because, as a comment about Gascon infantry used in the Welsh campaigns makes clear, their professionalism meant that they were considered to be more effective than the English levies. In the last decade of the thirteenth century at least, a good crossbowman may well have been more effective than an archer from amongst a fairly select levy of English and Welsh infantry. Despite this low estimation of the English levied archers they made an important contribution to the campaigns of both the English kings and the Marcher lords at this time.

Despite this evidence of there being goodly numbers of English archers for the English kings to call upon for military service in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the records of two Views of

Arms raise questions as to how effective Henry III and Edward I had been in extending the scope of the Assizes of Arms. One held in Reading in 1311 recorded eight men with bow arrows, sword and knife, thirty-three with bow, arrows and knife and at least 235 with axes and knives; only 15 per cent with bows, and arrows. Another held at Bridport in 1319 recorded the arms of about 180 men none of whom had bows and arrows; they only brought staves, knives, axes and swords.[58] If the Reading View was typical of most communities in the first decade of the fourteenth century in that they could produce 15 per cent of men aged between 15 and 60 carrying bows and arrows, at a time when the population has been estimated to be around five million, then there would be maybe 80,000–100,000 archers in England at that time.[59] While this figure is tentative, and makes no allowance for the varying skills of the men or the variable quality of their bows, it does at least suggest that there was a large pool of men with bows who could take part in military activity. The Bridport figure demonstrates that archery skills were more prevalent in some areas than others. But it also shows the effect of the Great Famine on the financial standing of ordinary people. The Great Famine started with a poor harvest in 1314, and was followed by two very wet years when the harvest was even worse. Grain prices did not return to a normal level until 1318. At the same time there had been widespread disease among sheep. If men had weapons according to their economic standing, then the Great Famine would have reduced that for many men. But, would that stop men owning very average quality homemade bows? Since Bridport was on the coast, perhaps the men's skills lay elsewhere.

In the 1330s English armies were raised in two ways. The majority of the archers and infantry were raised by Commissioners of Array from the large economic groups which were expected to have the weapons laid down in the Statute of Westminster. A smaller proportion of archers, particularly those who served as mounted archers, were raised by indenture. At this time this was a contract between a nobleman or knight and the Crown, which agreed that he and his retinue would serve the king for a stated period. The number of knights, men at arms and archers the retinue would contain was laid down in the indenture, as was the daily rate of pay. These archers were probably highly skilled men who would use a true longbow, thus providing an elite. It is quite possible that the archers who were so effective in the Battle of Dupplin Moor described below were men of this type. Some at least of these 'professional' archers were tenants of the retinue leader, maybe descendants of men like those noted above who held land for their service with a bow.[60]

Archers' Battles before the Hundred Years War

Before the Hundred Years War, perhaps the greatest battle on the English mainland where the outcome depended on archery was the Battle of the Standard in 1138. David I of Scotland had good relations with Henry I and had sworn, along with most of the great Anglo Norman nobles both clerical and lay, to support Henry's daughter Matilda as his heir. However, when it came to the actual succession in 1135, Stephen of Blois seized the throne with the support or passive compliance of a number of these same nobles. Matilda had no intention of letting her throne slip away, and so, with the support of a number of nobles, particularly her illegitimate half brother Robert, Earl of Leicester, she began efforts to establish her claim. David's invasions of Northern England were not motivated solely by a noble intent to keep his oath, he also had a desire to enlarge and enrich his kingdom at the expense of the Northern English.

In 1138 he made his third invasion, despite an earlier treaty between him and Stephen. David had raised a formidable army made up of forces representing all the military traditions of his kingdom. These included Anglo Norman Scottish knights exactly comparable to any in England or Normandy and a large number of ferocious tribal warbands of Gallowegians. These latter seem to have been particularly callous in their looting and slave taking. Although Stephen made a hurried journey north in early 1138, he was unable to settle matters with King David before he had to head south again to protect what he saw as his larger interests in Southern England. So in the summer of that year the Scottish army made a largely unopposed assault on the northern counties of England, scattering a small force of English knights and men at arms at the Battle of Clitheroe.

The major Anglo-Norman lords met together with Archbishop Thurstan at York to discuss what should be done to deal with David and his army who had reached the northern fringes of Yorkshire by this time. According to the chronicles, Archbishop Thurstan stiffened the resolve of northern magnates who went off to raise the local levies and collect their households together and muster back at York. Their forces, reinforced by some forces from Nottingham and Derbyshire and a small body of mercenary knights sent north by Stephen set off to confront the invaders. They took up position across the line of the Great North Road. Since they were the smaller force they resolved to stand on the defensive, the front line of the English army being described as follows by Richard of Hexham, a local churchman and chronicler in his prime at the date of the battle; 'then the greater part [of the knights and men at arms] left their horses and became foot. A chosen group of them mixed in with the archers in the front line as

had been planned.'[61] It is probable that more dismounted men stood in the front line in a more organised way than the chronicler's words could imply. Most of the other dismounted knights seem to have formed a second line around the cart on which the flag staff displaying the consecrated banners stood; the device which gives the battle its name. The other local levies seem to have been on the wings of these main battles.

While the chroniclers suggest that there was a dispute among the elements of the Scottish army as to who should have the honour of making the first assault, and that the Gallawegians were given the position, it is certain that David neither made effective use of any missile troops he had nor tried an assault by mailed horse at the start of the battle. The Gallawegians made a series of brave, wild charges at the English army which were repelled in large part by the archers, a chronicler commenting that '[they] looked like hedgehog spines, the Gallawegians stuck on all sides with arrows.'[62] A poetic description of what could happen to unarmoured troops facing what would later be called an arrowstorm. The Gallawegians lost heart and fled after two of their leaders fell. One chronicler also suggests that the men of Lothian also broke and left the battle after Gospatric Earl of Lothian was killed by an arrow. The Scottish mailed horsemen were steadier and David's son Henry, who had been made Earl of Huntingdon by Stephen in an attempt to buy peace in the North, led a brave charge of largely Anglo Scottish and Norman knights, which broke through one wing of the English army and went on to attack the unarmed servants holding the English knights horses. By this time the Scottish army had fallen apart and was retreating in disorder, leaving Henry in a difficult position behind his enemy's battle line. He and his men extracted themselves from this position, possibly by furling their banners and quietly riding away from the confusion. John of Hexham, born a generation after the battle, wrote that the Scots were destroyed by archery.[63]

The key point of this account of the Battle of the Standard is that two major contemporary northern chroniclers, Richard of Hexham and Aildred of Riveaulx make it clear that the local forces raised by the Northern magnates to resist the Scots included a large number of archers. While there were no doubt a number of professionals from noble households and tenants, the majority of these archers were raised from the local population. Clear evidence from the North of England at least, that men practised archery on a considerable scale. However, there is no real evidence about the size of the bows these men used. Aildred's description of the Gallawegians looking like hedgehogs because of the arrows stuck in them is part of a longer reference to the frenzy that took hold of them when they attacked.

Assuming it's not just a flight of poetic fancy, it suggests that the bows being used were perhaps not as powerful as those some of the Welsh used in Giraldus Cambrensis' accounts, since they would not necessarily stop men with two or three arrow strikes. The tactics used at the Battle of the Standard look back to Norse and Anglo-Saxon military practice, with the dismounted knights and the infantry levies effectively forming a shield wall. But the use of large numbers of archers to break the charges of the Scots is a radical departure from earlier tactics. It seems to have happened because many of the northern levies came with bows, possibly as a result of the Normans greatly restricting the ownership of weapons in the North as part of the pacification after William I's 'Harrying of the North'.

There are two battles late in Edward I's reign where the outcome turned on the archers' contribution. Together they can be taken as a clear evolutionary step from the tactics used by William of Normandy at Hastings towards the development of the English tactical system so successful in the following two centuries.

The first was at Maes Maidog in 1295, fought between an English (and Welsh) army under William Beauchamp Earl of Warwick, one of Edward's most experienced military commanders and the Welsh led by Madog ap Llewelyn, Prince of Wales. Madog was a distant relative of Llewelyn ap Gruffydd, otherwise known as Llewelyn the Last, whose death in 1282 had marked the end of the independent Principality of Wales. Since his father had revolted unsuccessfully against Llewelyn ap Gruffydd, Madog grew up in exile in England. There he received some sponsorship from Edward, as part of the latter's divide and rule policy in regard to the fractious Welsh noble families, and gained a position of some power in the aftermath of Llewelyn's death. But, by 1294, the Welsh were driven to revolt by the tax demands of Edward's administrators, and Madog became their leader. The Welsh were successful initially, taking Caernarfon and at least three other castles and besieging a number of others, even at one point containing Edward himself within Conwy Castle until an English fleet arrived in relief. By this time Edward was more focussed on matters in Scotland and so left the suppression of Madog and the Welsh to Warwick. Warwick surprised Madog and his army at Maes Maidog in Powys and sent the mailed horsemen to attack. The Welsh army, who in the tradition of the North Welsh were largely spearmen, quickly formed into a phalanx, what the Scots would call a schiltron, and beat off the cavalry, inflicting some losses. Warwick, faced with this unbreakable block of static infantry, brought forward his archers and crossbowmen who proceeded to inflict casualties on the Welsh. However, the Welsh seem to have held together and made a fighting retreat to the river Banwy which they crossed with difficulty and escaped into the forests.

Warwick demonstrated both that he had firm control over his men and that he had an understanding of how to use missile troops.

The second was the Battle of Falkirk in 1298. This was the main event of Edward I's invasion of Scotland in that year, made in response to the significant defeat his lieutenants had suffered at Stirling Bridge the previous year. There William Wallace had slaughtered a considerable portion of the English army by trapping them on his side of the bridge and preventing escape or reinforcements over the bridge. The archers in the English army seem to have been on the 'English' side of the bridge and made no contribution to the battle, if for no other reason than the English commander, John de Warenne Earl of Surrey, didn't use them to try to clear a way across the bridge. Whether this was because he was dumbfounded by the disaster befalling the part of his army on the 'Scottish' side of the bridge, or whether the range was too great we cannot know.

Edward and his army struggled through the deliberately emptied countryside of Southern Scotland chasing William Wallace and his army. Finally Wallace decided to stand at Falkirk with a sheltering forest to the rear of his army. His main strength was pike-armed infantry, although he also had a relatively small number of archers and a force of knights and men at arms collected by the nobles of Scotland and under the command of Lord Comyns. Edward, who was relieved to have the opportunity to deal with Wallace before he was forced to retreat for lack of supplies hurried up to Falkirk. The English cavalry rushed headlong to attack the Scottish army. The Scottish cavalry fled and the Scottish archers were destroyed as an effective force, leaving the Scottish pikemen standing in four great schiltrons. The English knights and men at arms soon learnt that they could do nothing to break up the schiltrons. Edward took control of the battle and brought forward his infantry and archers. In the words of William of Guisborough, a contemporary English chronicler:

> Then our archers attacked the Scottish spearmen, who, as has already been said, stood in circles with spears at an angle in the manner of a dense wood … But our infantry shot them and, there being a copious supply of round stones in the place, stoned them. Thus many were killed and others were knocked senseless and those in the outer part of the circle fell back on those others and the cavalry broke in and slaughtered them all.[64]

The mention of stoning the Scottish pikemen raises three possible questions; did the archers run out of arrows before their job was done and start to throw stones; was it the other infantry who helped the archers by stoning the Scots; or just possibly did William mean that

slingers were present. It is probable that if he had meant this last he would have been explicit, so we may assume that it was a combination of the other two circumstances. It is probable that the archers who caused such damage to the Scottish schiltrons were predominantly English for much of the battle, since one account at least suggests that the Welsh infantry stood by for most of the battle either because Edward didn't trust their effectiveness or because they were demoralised. This was because shortly before the battle, when the army was encamped near Edinburgh, the Welsh infantry fell to fighting with groups of the English troops, demoralised by the lack of supplies that were getting through to the army and the consequences of Wallace's 'scorched earth' policy. The Welsh were bloodily brought to order by the English knights, but they were not in a good state to be used in hard fighting. The main point in this account is that Edward maintained enough control over his army to use each part effectively to break the determined Scottish pikemen, a lesson forgotten by his son and the other leaders of the English army sixteen years later at Bannockburn. But one component of the English tactical system was still missing, neither Warwick nor Edward I thought to dismount the knights and men at arms to use them as heavy infantry.

The final significant archers' battle before Edward III's reign is the much smaller Battle of Boroughbridge in 1322. Despite the successes of Robert I of Scotland this battle was not an episode in the Anglo Scottish wars, but part of the continual struggle for power and influence between Edward II and his magnates that marked Edward's reign. Throughout his reign Edward II was greatly influenced by favourites, who antagonised the established magnates by their access to the king's ear, the king's profligate patronage of them and, in Piers Gaveston's case at least, a biting sense of humour which was exercised on the magnates. Thomas, Earl of Lancaster was the king's cousin and the second richest man in the kingdom after the king himself. He hated Edward's favourite Gaveston and was instrumental in the imposition of the Ordinances on Edward. These were a series of regulations signed by twenty-one lords aimed at restricting Edward II's power which he reluctantly accepted in 1311. In the following year Lancaster seized Gaveston and killed him after a trial which had no real legal standing. Thereafter, throughout the rest of the decade, Edward who was supported both by his new favourites the Despensers, and a number of English magnates some of whom had fallen out with Lancaster, made significant and successful efforts to escape the restrictions of the Ordinances. He focussed on the re-establishment of his own power rather than make sustained efforts against the Scots who under their renowned king Robert I were making repeated invasions into the Northern counties of England in

the aftermath of their great victory at Bannockburn.

As a result of Edward's efforts to regain his power and scope for independent action Thomas of Lancaster found himself effectively in rebellion against the king by 1321. Despite Edward's unpopularity, the majority of the magnates and nobles were reluctant to support Thomas against the lawfully crowned king, which left him in a very difficult position. In 1322 he found himself heading north being pursued by a powerful royal army. Thomas with his allies Humphrey de Bohun, Earl of Hereford and Roger de Clifford had an army of maybe 1,000 men seemingly made up entirely of knights and men at arms. When they reached Boroughbridge with the aim of crossing the river Ure and heading further north they found their way blocked by Andrew de Harclay and an army of maybe 4,000 men, mainly made up of infantry levies from the northern counties, particularly Cumberland and Westmoreland, and a very small number of mounted men at arms, quite possibly less than 100. Harclay was a tough practical military leader with a lot of experience fighting the Scots. His task was to stop Lancaster and his mounted force crossing the river, because if they did his infantry army would never catch them. So he stationed a large body of infantry pikemen, stiffened by dismounted men at arms to hold the bridge. These men may have had some archers in support but it is not clear. The rest of his army were drawn up at a nearby ford. This force also had a block of pikemen and dismounted men at arms to form the battle line, but they were supported on each wing by a large body of archers.

Lancaster recognised that the numerical imbalance put him in a difficult position so tried to negotiate with Harclay, who refused to change his stalwart loyalty to the king. So Lancaster, who was either confident that his knights and mailed men at arms would be able to break the largely unarmoured force facing him, or so desperate that he felt offense was his only option, ordered a two-pronged attack. Hereford and Clifford led an attack by dismounted knights and men at arms over the bridge while Lancaster led a mounted charge over the ford. Hereford and Clifford's attack was driven back after hard fighting, Hereford being killed, allegedly by a pikeman who got under the bridge and thrust up under his mail and Clifford was wounded. Lancaster's attack may never have got to blows since the northern archers shot the down the horses, breaking up any sort of order in the charge. This was the key event because if this mounted attack had stormed across the ford it could have broken or got round the body of pikemen facing the ford and then escaped or driven off the others at the bridge. Lancaster agreed a truce with Harclay, but overnight most of his remaining men deserted so Lancaster had to surrender to Harclay. Five days later, after a brief trial, Lancaster was beheaded at

Pontefract Castle. While it easy to argue that Harclay had learnt his tactics from the Scots, he also understood the importance of supporting a battle line of largely unarmoured troops with bowmen. Unlike the Scottish kings he seems to have had a ready supply of competent archers. The Battle of Boroughbridge is much more like the Battle of the Standard than it is the great infantry victories of the Scottish War of Independence at Stirling Bridge and Bannockburn because of these archers.

Two battles fought early in Edward III's reign make it clear that the tactics that he used to great effect in France were now part of English military practice. Robert I of Scotland died in 1329 leaving Scotland independent of England. England seemed weak after Edward II's ineffective reign, his deposition by his queen and the succession of his young son Edward III aged 14. But Scotland was also in a weak position since Robert's heir, David, was only 4. A group of Anglo Scottish nobles, known as the Disinherited, having lost their Scottish lands for their opposition to Robert the Bruce, later Robert I, saw their opportunity to right the wrongs they had suffered. These men included Edward Balliol, a claimant to the Scottish throne and Henry de Beaumont who was wealthy, a skilled politician and an experienced soldier who had been at both Falkirk and Bannockburn. At the latter battle he had lost his horse on the Scottish pikes and learnt the hard way that it was folly to attack Scottish schiltrons on horseback.

In 1332 Edward III was not prepared to break the Treaty of Northampton agreed by his mother Isabella and her paramour Roger Mortimer with the ailing Robert I, but he was unwilling to prevent the Disinherited from raising an army to press Balliol's claim to the Scottish throne. They invaded Scotland by sea with a small army of between 1,500 and 2,800 largely English men. They were faced by two much larger Scottish armies, one in front of them under the Scottish Regent, the Earl of Mar, and another approaching from the south under the Earl of Dunbar. De Beaumont seems to have been the leader of the Disinherited and he recognised the importance of meeting the Scottish forces separately before they could combine. So he manoeuvred skilfully to cross the River Earn at night and take up a strong position on high ground at the end of a shallow valley on Dupplin Moor. The Scottish leaders were outraged when they discovered this and Lord Robert Bruce, one of Robert I's bastards accused the Earl of Mar of treachery. The result was that these two impulsively led their divisions into an attack on the small army of the Disinherited in an uncoordinated display of competitive loyalty to the Scottish crown. De Beaumont, showing that he had learnt from his military experiences, drew up his men in a slight arc with archers on

the wings of a central block of dismounted knights, men at arms and infantry. As the first battle of the Scots came towards the Disinherited's line the archers showered them with arrows, weakening the assault and driving the Scots in on themselves in an attempt escape the arrows. The dismounted knights and infantry held the Scottish onslaught and started to push it back while the archers continued to shoot into the flanks of the Scots. The Scots in the first battle were unable to retreat or reform because the second battle piled into their rear pressing them forward. With pressure from the enemy in front, friends behind and the archers shooting on the flanks the Scottish attack literally collapsed and men suffocated in the press. As the Lanercost Chronicle described it 'the Scots were defeated chiefly by the English archers who so blinded and wounded the faces of the first division of the Scots by an incessant discharge of arrows that they could not support each other.' The Chronicle goes on to describe the consequence 'the pile of the dead was greater in height from the earth towards the sky than one whole spear length.'[65] The Scottish casualties were perhaps four times the total strength of the Disinherited's army, a truly shattering victory. While it is unclear how many the archers killed directly, they disabled the Scots with wounds and by driving them in on themselves and so enabled their infantry to withstand the Scottish attack and then slaughter the disabled enemy. While there is no doubt the Scots pulled defeat from the jaws of victory by precipitately attacking their opponents, the destructive effect of sustained archery on relatively lightly armoured troops was demonstrated.

After the Disinherited's success at Dupplin, Balliol claimed the kingship of Scotland but he was soon driven out. Whereupon, Edward III decided that he no longer needed to keep to the Treaty of Northampton also known as the 'Shameful Peace' in England. He raised an army 8,000–9,000 strong and went north and besieged Berwick on Tweed. Henry de Beaumont was part of the army and he discussed the tactics used so successfully at Dupplin with Edward. Archibald Douglas, the Guardian of Scotland raised a larger army, at least half as many men again as were in the English army, to attempt the relief of Berwick. By the end of June 1333 Sir Alexander Seton, the Scottish commander of Berwick was forced to make a truce with Edward, agreeing that if he was not relieved by 11 July he would surrender. Meanwhile, recognising the dangers of a direct attack on the well-organised besiegers Douglas tried to distract Edward by destroying the English port of Tweedmouth, and then besieging Bamburgh Castle, where Phillipa, Edward's queen was staying. Edward knew that Douglas had neither the power nor the time to make any real threat to Bamburgh and so he ignored the Scottish

manoeuvres. As a result Douglas had the unpleasant choice of trying to defeat the English army, something the Scots under Robert I had become quite used to, or to lose Berwick. Edward moved the bulk of his army to Halidon Hill from where he could survey the approaches to Berwick. He drew up his army in a formation that became the norm for English armies of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Infantry, dismounted knights and men at arms were drawn up in three battles, with archers massed on the wings, and possibly in smaller numbers between the battles. The Scots drew up in three massive schiltrons and advanced. As they came through marshy ground at the foot of the hill the arrows began to fall, and by the time the survivors struggled up the slope through the arrows to the English line they were in no condition to make much impact. It is probable that the number of Scots killed was higher than the total strength of the English army.

Berwick fell and the English tactical system was established.

Why Did the Longbow Win Battles?

Mailed or armoured heavy cavalry were the dominant force in military practice in Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. A major purpose of the feudal system in Europe was to provide the king or prince with as many practised mailed horsemen as possible. The basic building block of the system was the establishment of estates large enough to support such a man on the labours of the peasantry. In Post-Conquest England and France whether service was owed to the king of France or to the king of England, these estates were normally part of greater lords holdings who in turn would owe the king the service of a large number of knights. In the fourteenth century, the English, the Scots, the Swiss and the Flemings all demonstrated very forcibly that infantry armies could humble these usually noble and often near-professional fighting men. But the armoured horseman was not made redundant by these infantry armies. It is worth remembering that in the fifteenth century, the Hundred Years War ended with two bloody English defeats at the battles of Formigny and Castillon, where cavalry charges made important contributions to the French victories. But by the early decades of the fourteenth century, English military practice came to concentrate on armies that fought on foot and used relatively large numbers of archers in comparison to the number of knights and men at arms. The great Scottish victory at Bannockburn resembled Crecy and Agincourt with the English mounted nobility and gentry playing the part of the French making brave but ill-considered and ineffective attacks on stalwart infantry. It was, as the earlier English victories at Maes Maidog and Falkirk demonstrated, something of an aberration in English military development brought

about by Edward II's inability to control his knights in particular, and his army in general.

So, why did English military practice change from the 'traditional' European model relying on heavy cavalry to the highly unusual model, which has become known as the English tactical system, of a battle line of infantry, armoured to varying degrees, supported by a greater number of archers using powerful bows?

Firstly, King John's reign saw the breaking up of the cross-Channel combined realm of the kingdom of England and the Dukedoms of Normandy and Aquitaine. Philip Augustus of France was a powerful, able opponent for the Plantagenet kings of England. When the king of France was powerful, and Philip was perhaps the first French king for nearly two centuries who had the ability to bring his magnates under his control, the king of England's feudal position became very difficult, since he was the French king's vassal for the dukedoms of Normandy and Aquitaine. The problem of conflicting loyalties affected the magnates of England and Normandy regardless of whether their landholdings were wealthier in England or France since they were in the bind of owing fealty to two opposing kings. In the century and a half after the Conquest the large body of county knights in England had tended to have fewer landed interests on both sides of the Channel. In part this happened through the very understandable practice of dividing the inheritance, and so establishing separate English and Norman strands to the family. In the twelfth century only 10 per cent of the leading families in Warwickshire and Leicestershire had lands on both sides of the Channel. However, among the much smaller number of major magnates in England a high proportion still had valuable landholdings in Normandy at the end of the twelfth century. An even higher proportion of the Norman tenants in chief seem to have hung on to their cross-Channel property until the beginning of the thirteenth century.[66] The dispute between Philip Augustus and John led to these men having to make an often uncomfortable calculation as to which king they would swear fealty to, knowing that the other king would confiscate their holdings in his kingdom. John may well have found it difficult to inspire whole-hearted support from his magnates in England regardless of this circumstance, but at the start of his reign a number of the great Earls of England were half-hearted in their support for his campaigns in Northern France just because of their concerns about their Continental landholdings. Philip of France's achievement in dispossessing John of his lands in Northern France substantially reduced the revenues of the king of England and some of his magnates. Although the English king held on to much of Aquitaine through the thirteenth century it never raised revenues to replace those lost when Normandy was seized by

Philip. As a result the revenues John's son, Henry III, could apply to military activities were much more limited in comparison with those which John had used to so little effect, and more importantly much less than those available to the French kings.

Secondly, by the end of the thirteenth century, the kings of England could not raise a force of knights and men at arm to rival in numbers those that could be raised in Continental Europe. In the 1200s there were perhaps 4,500 knights whose individual wealth varied greatly. The biggest group were the lords of single manors, the men who were the basic building blocks of feudal society. Their annual income ranged between £10 and £20 per year, the minimum qualifying income for the knightly class. By the 1300s there were many fewer knights, possibly only between 1,250 and 1,300, or around a quarter of those available to the king a century earlier.[67] Why? This was not a time of population decline but it was a time of inflation, the price of wheat doubling in the first four decades of the thirteenth century.[68] The income of the nobles, both the great magnates and the lesser knights, did not rise to match inflation. Those knights with small estates would have very little spare produce to take advantage of the rising prices. As a result knightly status with its expensive military burden became much less attractive.

Another consequence of the loss of Normandy was that the king and the nobility became 'English' regardless of the language they continued to speak. While the king retained Aquitaine, Henry III for one rarely visited it, and his travels became much more a sequence of progresses round his estates in England. At the same time England became very important to the nobles since they had only lands in the British Isles to concentrate on.[69] Meanwhile Magna Carta was issued and regularly reissued. This not only attempted to define the limits of arbitrary royal authority, but also, extended the involvement of the knights and the free men of England in national government through Parliament and in local government and justice. Without getting romantic about Magna Carta, it is not unreasonable to suggest that, combined with loss of the lands in Normandy, it brought about a singular change of focus within the kingdom of England wherein the problems of England and the English king, could only be resolved by relying on English resources, including the population at large. For example, it was no longer possible for the English king to be militarily effective by following the Continental military traditions imported by William the Conqueror. This did not mean that in the fighting within the British Isles in the thirteenth century that mailed horsemen ceased to be the primary battle-winning force, particularly in the battles between Henry III and his barons led by Simon de Montfort. But it meant that successful English campaigns in this century involved a

combination of forces, mailed horsemen, infantry and archers, and that this was a step along the path to the fourteenth-century practice of English armies being very successful fighting on foot with substantial numbers of archers. Part of this transition was the increasing use of English archers using hand bows as opposed to crossbowmen whether English or foreign mercenaries. This was encouraged by the developments in the Assizes of Arms in the thirteenth century, and by a development for which there is little direct evidence, the increasing use of heavy bows, what were later known as the English longbow or warbow. One small piece of evidence which shows up the increasing use of archers is a record of the pay of the garrison of Norwich Castle in 1269, in the period when Henry III and his vigorous son Edward (soon to be Edward I) were consolidating their position in the aftermath of the wars with the barons. This shows that the garrison was made up of the following men at various times in that year: six men at arms, six crossbowmen and eighteen archers; eighteen men at arms, two crossbowmen and eight archers; five men at arms, four crossbowmen and six archers.[70] So, while it was never a large force, the garrison consistently included more archers than crossbowmen.

The garrisons of some of the Welsh castles in the years after the death of Llewelyn the Last also show the rising importance of the archer over the crossbowman. In 1295 during the rising led by Rhys ap Maredudd, the English garrison of the newly captured Dryslwyn Castle was two knights, twenty-two men at arms, twenty crossbowmen and eighty archers. Of these, four of the men at arms and forty of the archers were Welsh. Four years later as the situation appeared more peaceful the garrison was reduced to a few men at arms, twenty crossbowmen and thirty archers. During the Welsh risings of 1294–5 in which Madoc ap Llewelyn was a major figure, Reginald de Grey reinforced the garrisons of Flint and Rhuddlan Castles so that one stood at twenty-four knights and men at arms, twenty-four crossbowmen and 120 archers, while the other had four knights and men at arms, twelve crossbowmen and twenty-four archers. In the same time of unrest, Builth town and castle was held by a garrison six knights and men at arms, twenty crossbowmen and forty archers for six weeks against blockading Welsh.[71] These figures suggest that the ordinary archer, whether levied or hired, was attractive to a commander because he was effective and cheap to equip and pay. The consistent number of crossbowmen at Dryslwyn may suggest that the crossbowmen were still professional soldiers whereas many of the archers might not yet be so.

There is no doubt that Edward I's campaigns mark the time in English military history when a decisive shift began. The estimation of

crossbows as the most powerful and valued form of military archery began to wane and the understanding of the effectiveness of hand bow archery increased rapidly. Men practised more with bows to meet the requirements of the Assizes of Arms, and the need for these bows to rival the range and effectiveness of the contemporary crossbows may well have led to the bows used by the archers in Edward I's later campaigns, and those of his son, to resemble more consistently what we would now call longbows. But this is far from clear. There is nothing to suggest that the crossbow suddenly ceased to be used. One example that makes this very clear was a company raised by the City of Bristol for Edward II's army in the ill managed Bannockburn campaign of 1314 which consisted of forty crossbowmen and sixty archers.[72]

Equipping and Paying the Archers

The king and the officials organising musters in Henry III's and Edward I's reigns expected that the bowmen, whether using crossbows or hand bows, would come to the place of muster properly equipped either at their own or their community's expense. The surviving records suggest that on occasion Henry III paid his levied infantry wages once they reached the muster point mentioned in the writ of summons, a practice which his son Edward I followed consistently. It is difficult to find any clear evidence of how archers were expected to find additional arrows once they used up those they had brought to muster. Neither king seems to have done much to arrange supplies of weapons for these men to replace those lost, broken or used on campaign. If this was the case it would have limited their effectiveness, leaving the archers to scavenge or make arrows whenever they could. While the Assizes of Arms outlined the arms particular income groups should have, there is no record of what was considered an adequate number of arrows that communities should provide to the archers they sent to the local muster to be examined there by the Commissioners of Array. There is some slight evidence that in Edward I's reign twelve arrows was considered an adequate supply for an archer in military service. In 1285, William Fitzwarren made two purchases of bows and arrows. On the first occasion he bought twenty-four bows and twenty-four dozen arrows, the majority of which were given to 'Welsh archers of the king'; on the second he bought just five bows and five dozen arrows, again for the King's Welsh archers. The bows cost 17½*d* and arrows nearly 10*d* per dozen in the first order and 16*d* and 8½*d* respectively in the second.[73] These prices are similar to those paid by Edward III's administration in the 1340s. But another order shows the low cost, and therefore

presumably the low quality, of the bows and arrows sometimes issued to Welshmen in King Edward's armies in Scotland. The Wardrobe Rolls note that in 1300 ten Welshmen in the King's Household received coats, bows and arrows for 2/- each, in the earlier orders bows and arrows alone cost more than 2/-.[74]

These prices contrast greatly with those paid by Edward I for crossbows and quarrels at a similar time. In 1282 the royal administration paid between 3/- and 5/- for one foot crossbows (i.e. could be spanned by holding them with only one foot) and between 5/- and 7/- for two foot crossbows (more powerful weapons that needed the use of both feet to span them). At about this time Exchequer records note that between 10/- and 13/3*d* per 1,000 quarrels was being paid, between 1½*d* and 2*d* per dozen. A hint of the scale of crossbow use by the English royal armies in Wales can be found in the orders placed in preparation for the major campaign in 1277. In March of that year, 150,000 quarrels for one foot crossbows and 50,000 for two foot crossbows were ordered.[75] What proportion was delivered is another matter of course. In Edward III's reign, royal orders for arrows in the 1340s and '50s were often not completed.

Despite the considerable difference in the cost of bows and arrows in comparison with costs of supplying crossbows and quarrels, it seems clear that the extra cost was justified in Edward I's view because crossbows were sufficiently more effective, against the Welsh at least.

Sieges seem to have been an exception to the reluctance shown by the kings to provide replacement equipment for the archers. This is not surprising since once the army settled down in one place for a period of time it would make resupplying much easier than it was when an army was on the march. Also regular resupplying was vital if the besiegers were to keep up the pressure on the besieged. In 1266 as part of his efforts to finish off the baronial rebels after the death of Simon de Montfort at the Battle of Evesham, Henry III was besieging Kenilworth Castle. At this time you might expect there to be both archers and crossbowmen in his army but the archers must have been particularly useful in harassing the defenders since an order was sent to the Sheriff of Surrey and Sussex for him to send 300 sheaves of 'well prepared' arrows to Kenilworth.[76] When Edward I established his siege of Stirling Castle in 1304 he ordered supplies of both bows and arrows for his archers to maintain their effectiveness in the prolonged siege. 130 bows and 200 quivers of arrows were sent from London; Lincolnshire sent 286 bows and 1,200 arrows, Newcastle 59 bows and Yorkshire 320 bows.[77] The ordering of bows suggests that the bows used by the archers had a limited effective life and so some at least would need replacing during a siege. This may suggest that yew bows,

which in general retain their efficiency for much longer than meane wood bows made of ash, elm etc., were less commonly used in the army in Edward I's time than was the case in the fifteenth century when the international trade in bowstaves was well established. The sheriffs were the main agents in supplying these bows as became the norm in Edward III's reign, when Lincolnshire also proved to be one of the major suppliers. We don't know how many arrows would be in a quiver, except that in two cases noted above, quivers owed as rent contained twelve arrows. It seems more likely that the 1,200 arrows supplied form Lincolnshire were to equip 100 archers with a dozen arrows than fifty with twenty-four as might be expected in Edward III's French wars when sheaves of arrows are known to have contained two dozen arrows. In June and July 1304 there were also four men present at the siege of Stirling whose job was to make arrows for the army, but there is no record of whether they found the materials locally or if they were brought in from elsewhere.

Circumstances were different for the various garrisons in Scotland; Edward was well aware that a garrison needed reliable supplies of arms to be effective. In 1300 for example equipment acquired for Stirling Castle included: eighteen crossbows for one foot, fifty bows, eighteen dozen bowstrings (assuming that they are all for the bows rather than the crossbows, which is reasonable given the relative difficulty in fitting crossbow strings in comparison to bow strings – consider the story of the Genoese crossbowmen at Crecy who could not protect their strings from the rain), just over four strings per bow, 200 goose wings to fletch quarrels and arrows.[78] But, in contrast to this, only crossbows were sent to Dumfries and Lochmaben castles.[79]

The daily rate of pay for different types of troops seems to have been fairly constant in the last four decades of the thirteenth century. In 1269 the payment of the garrison of Carlisle Castle for a year and seventy days' service is recorded. Two knights received 2/- per day, a serjeant 12*d*, fourteen esquires 6*d*, nine unmounted crossbowmen 3*d* and thirty-six foot archers 2*d* per day.[80] The importance of the archers is clear by their numbers, although no doubt their relative cheapness was also attractive. But given the importance of Carlisle Castle, these archers would not have just been 'make weights', they must have been militarily effective. Infantry, both archers and others, were paid 2*d* per day while serving in Wales, whereas crossbowmen earned at least 3*d* per day in the same campaign. For comparison, labourers such as tree fellers used to clear safe roads for the king's army were paid the same as the archers and infantry, while craftsmen earned 3*d* or 4*d* like the crossbowmen. At the end of their service Edward paid a 'tip' to many groups. In one case 453 Shropshire archers this was the equivalent of 1*d* each to drink the king's health, while a group of wounded

Glamorgan archers received a more generous 40/- between them.[81]

It is difficult to know how many archers Edward had in his forces in Scotland in 1300 because, in common with other Scottish campaigns, the armies in general and forces of levied infantry in particular suffered from notable rates of desertion. The situation is further obscured by the seemingly common practice of dismissing bodies of levied infantry after fairly short periods of service and replacing them with new levies. Payments were made for groups of archers serving for eighty-one days and as few as twelve days.[82] This may have been an attempt to reduce the consequences on the forces in Scotland of desertion by sending men home before they took themselves off. It is also quite possible that it is a consequence of short term planning and a concern to keep the wage costs as low as possible. But considerable numbers of archers were paid for service in Scotland in 1300. These included nearly 1,500 from the Border counties, another 1,100 from Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Cheshire, nearly 3,500 from Yorkshire and 206 archers from Ireland.[83]

The wage rate for these foot archers gives an indication of their perceived military value. As with the Welsh campaigns, these archers were paid 2*d* per day, the same as diggers hired to help build fortifications. Crossbowmen seem to have been paid 3*d* or 4*d* per day, the same as carpenters and other craftsmen, and the vintenars who lead bodies of 20 foot archers.[84] So the foot archer was seen as an equivalent of the very necessary, but not very skilled diggers, rather than craftsmen or skilled crossbowmen. By the late fourteenth century an archer was paid the same rate or more than most craftsmen.

The military effectiveness of the bodies of military archers raised by the kings of England and the magnates in their campaigns both to defend the realm and extend their holdings into the neighbouring Celtic kingdoms and principalities must have been limited by the number of arrows available to each archer. As might be expected given the apparent low esteem foot archers were held in, there are no records of bowyers or fletchers among the craftsmen supporting the forces in the field in 1300, although the carpenters, attilatoris and smiths that were present could have provided some support to the archers if necessary.[85] One of the great advances in Edward III's reign was to ensure a much larger supply of arrows. Whether it matched the number supplied in the fifteenth century is debatable, but from the 1330s onwards the archers of England and Wales would not be reduced to throwing rocks at their enemies in the way that they were at the Battle of Falkirk.

Notes

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IX

Contemporary Evidence for Bows and Arrows in Medieval England

Our detailed knowledge of the bows and arrows used in the eleventh to the fourteenth centuries in England comes from the main sources. A few legal records provide more detailed information than the usual frustratingly brief comment that someone used a bow and arrows. There are archaeological finds which are limited by two chance factors, what has survived and, of the surviving material, what has been discovered. Thirdly there are a broad range of artistic representations. Perhaps the most useful of these are the manuscript illustrations particularly those found in a group of remarkable illuminated manuscripts dating to the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. In addition to these there are medieval church wall paintings, carvings and tiles. Adding all these together provides some sketchy illumination on the use and development of bows and arrows among the people of medieval England in these centuries.

Any discussion of bows and arrows in this period is bedevilled by the uncertainty as to exact equivalency of the units of measurement. An inch can be taken as similar to the one we have now, but should not be taken as a standardised measure from a tape or ruler. As the report from 1274 below makes clear, an inch can be different from a thumb, and may be longer. An ell is much more complicated. The Latin word '*ulna*', which is commonly translated as ell, was also used to mean the yard.[1] Edward I issued a statute setting standards for measures late in the 1290s which stated that 'it is to be remembered that the iron ulna of our Lord the King contains three feet and no more; and a foot should contain 12in.'[2] As regards the ell itself as a unit of measurement, there were at least three variants that could be used in medieval England: the English ell which measured about 45in, the Scottish ell about 37in and the Flemish ell about 27in. With the clear support of Edward I's statutory definition of the ulna as a yard, I

will translate '*ulna*' not as ell but as yard, which will make comparisons of the measurements of bows and arrows in medieval records with those of modern longbow bows and arrows much more straight forward.

Any discussion of the bows and arrows used in these centuries would be incomplete without some comments on who made them. How far did people rely on craftsmen bowyers and fletchers, and how many people seem to have made their own archery equipment? This chapter ends with a brief review of the evidence for the developments of the archery trade and industry which became so noticeable in England by the fifteenth century.

Legal Records

The records of the Forest Justices of Northamptonshire in the early 1250s include mentions of various types of arrow.[3] These include two references to Welsh (*wallenses*) arrows, someone owning seven barbed arrows and a small arrow with five fletches, another person both barbed arrows and unbarbed (*genderese*) arrows, a group of poachers carrying a bird bolt (*bosun*) as well as ordinary arrows. Welsh arrows are very difficult to define. Having looked at the arrowheads held by the National Museum of Wales dating to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries it is very difficult to pick out a type of arrowhead which is clearly different to types found in England. But mention of them as part of this group of arrow types suggests that the mid-thirteenth century was a time when archery and arrows in particular were developing rapidly. Barbed arrows appear in a number of records around this time suggesting that their use was developing, but men continued to use the older unbarbed arrows at the same time. Bird bolts under various names also appear in a number of records suggesting that they were quite commonly owned either for practise shooting or hunting small game which had fewer restrictions upon it. The term 'small arrow' occurs occasionally, but this example with five fletches is unique and may have been a specialist arrow for shooting at birds or small animals in trees, relying on the multiple fletches to slow its descent if the archer missed. The obvious guess at the purpose of small arrows was that they were made to be used with light bows, maybe more commonly by women or children than men.

In 1274 Wymund le Chanu was accused of fatally wounding Hugh Bel of Colmworth in Bedfordshire. The court record says that he used a 'bow of yew', 'the cord being of hemp' and shot 'a barbed arrow of peacock feathers of which the shaft was of beech wood.' The wound this arrow inflicted in Hugh's thigh was 3in deep, 1in wide and three thumbs high.[4]

Thirteenth and early fourteenth-century court records tend to give more detail of the archery equipment used in crimes than those of later centuries. The thirteenth century marked a rapid growth of detailed record keeping by various courts of law and administrators, which may in part explain the scribes' tendency to be more detailed in their record keeping. But all in all it is reasonable to assume that since the court record specifically mentions that the bow was yew, this was relatively unusual at the time. The bowstring was made of hemp, which there is every reason to believe was a commonly used material for bowstrings at this date. Other plant fibres including flax and nettle fibres were used for bowstrings in the past so, it is probable that hemp was the best available material for a bow string at this relatively early date. About a century later Gaston Phoebus mentions a silk string in his description of a hunting bow such as a man of his standing might use.

The height and width of Hugh Bel's wound suggest that the barbed arrowhead was of middling size for broad barbed arrowheads. These arrowheads, which can be up to 4in (100mm wide), are now commonly called swallowtails, and belong to types H3 and H4 in Jessop's typology of medieval arrowheads which will be discussed in more detail below. The date of this crime fits with the chronology in Jessop's typology for these types of arrowhead.

This is the earliest mention of peacock fletchings that I am aware of, and is interesting in that it shows that the wealthier, more dedicated archers were consistent in their preference for these showy feathers to fletch their arrows.

Beech is rarely mentioned as an arrow shaft wood, probably because it was more valuable for other uses. However, it is a relatively stiff wood which should have a good spine, although it might prove more likely to break than ash or poplar. Writing over 250 years later, Ascham states that 'alder, blackthorn, service tree, beech, elder, asp, and sallow, either for their weakness or lightness, make hollow, starting, studding, gadding shafts .'[5] He only makes a particular recommendation for a shaft wood when discussing war arrows, where he recommends ash over aspen, which he records as being commonly used in his day for military arrows. His judgement is guided by the knowledge gained over two centuries when the English and Welsh archers were a dominant force on the battlefields of Western Europe.

The bow and arrow used by John of Tylton to kill Simon of Skeffington in 1298 is described in even greater detail.[6] The bow was made of yew, an ell and half long and 6in (15.2cm)in circumference, (the record uses the term '*grossitudinis in circuitu*' which has been translated as thick but literally means greatness around). The bow would be about 54in (1.37m) long translating '*ulna*' as yard and about

2in (5cm) thick if either 'd' shaped or roundish in section. The string is a fathom and a half long (2.74m) and half an inch in circumference (12.7mm) or about 3–4mm thick. There is no mention of the bowstring material. The arrow shaft was ash, three quarters of an ell long, about 27in (68.6cm), and 1in (25mm) in circumference, or about 8–10mm in diameter. The arrow had peacock fletchings and a barbed head of iron and steel, three thumbs long by two wide. It is not clear whether the whole arrow was 27in long or if the length of the arrowhead should be added on. Taking 27in as the total arrow length would make it about 3in (7.6cm) longer than the arrow found at Waterford described below, and so a very reasonable length for the length of bow it was used with. Both the bow and arrow are noticeably shorter than those made for war 250 years later that were found on the *Mary Rose*. The bow and the arrow were made of what is regarded as the best woods available, which if added to the peacock fletchings, suggests that John of Tylton was either a man of some standing, or a man who practised archery in his job. As was noted above, the 6-inch (15.2cm) deep wound made by the arrow suggests that the bow was powerful, as might be expected in yew bow with these dimensions.

The court records reporting the events leading to the death of Robert de Esnyngton in 1314 are very significant because of the number of detailed references to both bows and arrows.[7] Although, as has been noted above, this indictment may be 'creative' in regard to the actual circumstances of Robert's death, there is no reason to believe that it used terms which the people of the time knew to be completely fanciful. Margaret, Robert's widow, appealed six men for using bows and arrows against her husband, and another nine men for assaulting him with various other weapons or otherwise assisting in his death. The bows and arrows are described as follows: a bow of Spanish yew, two ells (6 feet or 1.83m) in length, and of the thickness of four men's thumbs used to shoot a barbed arrow called a clotharewe; a bow of Irish yew shot a barbed arrow called a Doggearewe; a bow called Turkeys of Spanish yew, one and a half ell (54in or 1.37m) in length shot a barbed arrow called a Wolfarewe made of ash and three-quarters of an ell (27in or 68.6cm) in length; a bow made of elm shot a barbed arrow called a Scotische arewe, which was made of a wood called in Romanis Boul, an ell (36in or 91.4cm) in length, and feathered with the red feathers of a peacock; a bow made of Irish yew shot a barbed arrow called a Scotische arewe; and finally an undefined bow and arrow was used by an assailant whose name sounds to have been Welsh.[8]

The emphasis in the descriptions of the bows that the yew was of foreign origin is interesting. Very good English yew can still be found

with care, and would have been more widely available in medieval England. However, this probably became increasingly difficult as the demand for military bows grew very rapidly through the fourteenth century. In this example, while the foreign origin may just be another example of the appeal's over emphatic nature, it can also be taken as evidence of both Spain and Ireland being recognised sources of bowstaves. As regards the length of the bows, the description of the 'bow called Turkeys' as being three quarters the length of the other Spanish yew bow is intriguing. Both bows were made of wood with broadly similar characteristics, but what is a 'bow called Turkeys'? The simplest explanation is that it looked similar to a Turkish bow, in that it had recurved limbs. As such this would be evidence of the process of adding a recurve to bow limbs by heat treatment being practised occasionally at this time. The recurve in the limbs would have to be much less pronounced than would be the case in a real Turkish laminated bow since a yew stave would not tolerate such extreme curvature being added. This similarity would be aided by its relatively short length when compared to an ordinary bow. The length of the arrow, at 27in, would suit the likely shorter draw length of such a bow.

The emphasis on five of the six arrows being barbed, regardless of their colourful type names, could be a reflection of the fact that barbed arrows create larger, more serious wounds, and so all part of the rather rich language Margaret used in making her appeal. The emotion laden names, a dog arrow, a wolf arrow, were perhaps used to suggest that the arrows that bit hard, while a Scottish arrow may refer to the hard destructive reputation the Scots had in Northern England. The mention of two shaft woods, ash and '*Romanis boul*' is more significant. Ash was well known throughout the period as perhaps the best shaft wood. *Romanis Boul* seems to be a type of birch. Birch wood varies in its characteristics dependent on where the trees grow, but it is easy to find birch wood which will make light strong shafts capable of being shot from substantial bows. This birch arrow, fletched with peacock feathers and a yard long and was shot from the elm bow. The arrow length suggests that the elm bow would have been what we would call a longbow, the greater arrow length being required by the bow's greater draw length.

There is no record of which bow woods bowyers favoured at this point in the development of bowyery in medieval England. Yew has been regarded as the best bow wood for millennia (Utzi's bow is yew). There is surviving evidence of an international trade in bowstaves bringing staves to England in the thirteenth century but it developed rapidly through the fourteenth century to meet the demand for good warbows.[9] Giraldus Cambrensis, writing in the twelfth century

specifically notes that the archers of Gwent made their bows from elm, not from yew (or horn).[10] At the end of the period in 1511–12, Henry VIII had to legislate to encourage bowyers to make bows of 'Elme, Wiche or other wode of mean price.'[11] So it is clear that while elm had long been recognised as a worthwhile bow wood, elm bows by Tudor times were regarded as 'every day' bows, and it is likely that most were owned by ordinary men. This is the interesting point about the man who allegedly shot a birch arrow from an elm bow at Robert de Esnyngton in 1314. These woods were regarded as nothing special by the fifteenth century, yet the arrow was described as fletched with peacock feathers, something that was usually done only for high-status arrows. Does this imply that in the early fourteenth century elm bows were sought after, with only yew bows being more highly rated?

Bows of ash and wych elm are being made to medieval profile by a number of bowyers. As the sample list of bows below makes clear bows made of these 'meane woods' as they would be called in Tudor times, can have considerable draw weights.

[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible] point (inches)
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]

The Czech ash bow weighs about 4.5lbs. With a bow this substantial it is easy to see how people could use a bow as a staff to beat someone.

The wych elm bows have a good shooting performance, but they loose some of their performance in a day's shooting much more quickly than a yew bow. As yet their longevity compared with a self yew bow is unknown.[12]

Contemporary Artistic Portrayals of Archery

In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries four types of artistic representation show us how contemporary artists and their audiences saw archery. There are three types of painted and drawn illustrations: manuscript illustrations, wall paintings and glazed tiles. The most widely known now are those in manuscript books, particularly one or two images from the remarkable *Luttrell Psalter*. But in the Middle Ages the most widely seen would have been the wall paintings found in churches. While it might be an exaggeration to say every medieval church had wall paintings, the vast majority would have had some. Out of all of the paintings and drawings created in England in these centuries, a smaller proportion of the wall paintings has survived,

than of the manuscripts illustrations. In part this is because of the inevitable decay arising from the passage of seven centuries. But church wall paintings were painted over as fashions in both painting style and subject matter changed, and at the orders of new patrons who wanted to leave their mark in their church by having new paintings made to demonstrate their devotion and as a form of memorial. Throughout the period churches were extended and improved which sometimes led to paintings being interrupted or destroyed by new windows or arches. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the powerful movement against idolatry led to paintings being vandalised, removed, painted or plastered over. In more recent times more paintings were lost to the Victorians in their enthusiasm for church restoration. Some of these were beyond their abilities to preserve, others they destroyed because it was felt that the paintings did not suit 'modern' religious practice, and some they restored too thoroughly for the original to be identified with certainty. But despite all this, there are a few paintings from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries which show archers, always engaged in martyring a saint, most commonly St Edmund of Bury. The painters who were hired to create wall paintings were rarely monks, but were laymen (and one or two women) who in the larger cities at least, belonged to a craft guild.[13] In general the evidence suggests that wall painters, glass painters and manuscript illustrators were separate specialists, who only very occasionally might work in a different medium to their main craft.

The English manuscript illustrations that show us recreational archery both practice and hunting, differ from the majority of the illustrations of military archery in that they are ornaments or marginal drawings, decorating the book, rather than illustrations referring directly to the text of the book itself. As a result many of these illustrations show activities that have been observed by the artist, whereas many of the illustrations of military activity in fourteenth century manuscripts are more formal idealised artistic representations.

Illustrations of archery can be found in many of the surviving manuscripts produced in England before around 1350 which in itself suggests that archery was part of everyday life. Seven major English manuscripts of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries that contain illustrations of archers and archery are discussed here to give an outline of how archery was seen at the time. One of the manuscripts dates to the third quarter of the thirteenth century while the other six date to between 1310 and 1340. The picture of men shooting at butts in the *Luttrell Psalter* is probably the best known record of medieval men practising archery. If the statutes and other written records are taken at face value, the practitioners of archery as a sport and as

practise for war in medieval England were exclusively male, even when children are mentioned. But there is evidence from manuscript illustrations that some women in the noble and gentry classes hunted with bows and arrows as late as the fourteenth century at least.

The *Luttrell Psalter* is thought to date to between 1320 and 1340, and was certainly created in England, possibly at Lincoln. This date is significant since it means that the Psalter shows men practising archery before the great victories of Edward III's reigns at Sluys, Crecy and Poitiers. These not only established the military reputation of the English and Welsh archers, but perhaps more importantly led the mass of ordinary men in England and Wales to believe that it was worthwhile practising archery for the chance of taking part in glorious and profitable military expeditions.

There were four main illustrators, all now anonymous, who created most of illustrations in the *Luttrell Psalter*, and two more doing minor work. Modern writers comment favourably on the work of these four saying that that one of them had 'the ability to produce figures with convincing postures'; another is described as being 'well trained in the observation of posture and the human form'. Another 'specialised in rural scenes' and 'uses paint with great effect'.[14] These comments suggest that it reasonable to assume that the illustrations are broadly accurate. Rural activities such as ploughing and carting were painted from direct observation. For that reason the picture of the men shooting at the butts has been accepted as evidence that the ordinary men of rural Lincolnshire shot for sport. However, it has also been suggested that one of the reasons that archery as a rural activity is so clearly represented in the Psalter is that Sir Geoffrey Luttrell wanted to demonstrate that he was an up-to-date estate holder who made efforts to comply with laws such as the Statute of Winchester personally and encouraged his tenants to do the same. In this he was supporting the contemporary system for raising military forces.[15] There are other pictures in the Psalter which support this idea. At the foot of folio 56r there is a picture of an archer stringing his bow which is at least as long as he is tall. He has an arrow in his belt which isn't shown in great detail, but the nock is slightly bulbous and the head is broad and triangular with swept back tips (see plate 13). This head resembles the MP6 or MP7 types in Jessop's typology of medieval arrowheads. These could be used for either hunting or military archery, and had been in development and use for as much as 100 years by the time the Psalter was being made.[16] An illustration at the foot of folio 46r shows a king reading while holding two very similar arrows. Another archer with a bow as long as himself appears in the margin of folio 45r. Besides his bow he has a bollock dagger and one arrow, which has a blunt head very like those shown in use in the

famous butts picture. All these pictures are by either the first or second Luttrell artists. The famous butts picture at the foot of folio 147v is the work of the fourth major illustrator, and shows six men shooting (see plate 14). The bows used by the men vary in length from about 'an ell and a half' to ones as long as the shooter. Two of the men have small circular bracers on their left arm; one of them appears to be advising on shooting or saying something like 'beat that then' while pointing at the butt. All the arrows have bulbous nocks and blunt heads.

The assessment of the skills of the illustrators makes it reasonable to accept that the *Luttrell Psalter*, in common with other English manuscripts of the period, accurately portrayed the bows in common use. They went to the trouble to show the bumps and dips typical of a self bow, and so when they drew bows of different lengths, some as long as the archer was tall, other bows only as long as the distance from just below the archer's knee to the top of his head, they were drawing the bows in use by ordinary men at the time. This does not mean that there were two distinct types of bow; a longbow as long as the archer, and a short bow or half bow of lesser length. It was just a matter that whoever made the bows that the ordinary men used, made them to meet the archer's needs and as long as they could from the materials available. Finally it is vital to bear in mind that the artists of the fourteenth century were just as skilled as those of later centuries. They may not have understood perspective, but then no other artists did at that date. Their abilities to observe people in their everyday life and create lively pictures that a viewer would recognise as true were as high as many later named and renowned artists.

Several different types of arrowhead are shown in the *Luttrell Psalter*, some of which have already been commented on. At the foot of folio 215r there is a picture of an archer about to shoot a bird using a relatively short bow and a bird bolt. Two of the artists show barbed arrows with differing length barbs; one illustration (f33v) is just an ornament showing five barbed arrowheads while another (f164r) shows a centaur shooting a broad head arrow. All the archers have only two or three arrows at most. All the arrows have bulbous nocks.

The Rutland Psalter which dates to the second half of the thirteenth century is less useful since most of the illustrations that portray archery are fanciful ornaments involving centaurs, a merman and a headless man with his face on his chest. Yet the artists clearly observed popular sports since there are pictures of wrestling, heaving a large stone and sword and buckler play. There are six pictures of hand bows and one finely drawn picture of a crossbow. Two of the bows are recurved 'Turkish' style bows, three roughly head to knee length and one is a true longbow. This last one (f87v) shows a roughly

finished longbow being used by a black man to shoot a merman. He has just released the arrow from a two-fingered draw. He has more arrows in his belt, and the arrows are sketched in ink lines with light barbed heads and bulbous nocks.

The Queen Mary Psalter was probably created in London in about 1310–20. It includes a number of pictures of archery including one showing a mounted huntsman, an archer carrying a strung bow as long as he is tall and a pair of hounds (see plate 12). This may show the sort of working 'team' used in bow and stable hunting, with the mounted hunter using great skill to bring the deer on to the archer, who in turn had hounds to track and possibly bring down wounded deer that ran any distance. The archer's bow is a typical self bow, having bumps where the bowyer had to follow knots in the stave, and he has just three arrows tucked in his belt. All the other pictures of archery are related to either hunting or possibly competition shooting. The pictures of warfare in the Psalter only show combatants carrying knightly arms. One illustration shows two archers with knee-length bows shooting at a cock and another bird in a tree, this may be a competition with the birds tethered like modern popinjay shooting since the picture in near another showing the popular sport of wrestling (both p.193). This is another example of the use of shorter bows in popular archery practice like those shown in the *Luttrell Psalter*. Two illustrations of longbows appear in episodes from the Old Testament. In the first one (f13r), Jacob is asking his twin brother Esau to go hunting. Esau is carrying fairly smooth unstrung longbow and has arrows with shield fletches and flared nocks stuck in his belt. Esau was portrayed as a contemporary ordinary huntsman very similar to the picture of the hunting 'team', in line with his biblical reputation. The second (f40v) shows a group of soldiers including a crossbow man. The leader, Jephthah a judge and military leader of the Israelites against the Ammonites, is carrying a roughly finished unstrung longbow, and an arrow which has shield fletches and a triangular barbed head. The artist of the Queen Mary Psalter seems to have had the view that serious hunters, and some military archers, would use long self bows.

The Taymouth Hours, which was probably created in London somewhere around 1325–35, also shows arrows with bulbous nocks.[17] It is unusual, but not unique in showing a woman hunting with a bow and arrow. Her bow is relatively short in comparison to her height and possibly slightly reflexed at the tips. The arrows are fairly short and massive, she has just shot one and has perhaps three more in some kind of loop or open pocket on the back of her over mantle. While this is perhaps the least realistic representation in this group of manuscripts, her arrows are clearly blunts designed to knock down

small game. Like all the specialist hunting types of arrowhead, a large blunt would be less likely to bury itself than a narrow point.

The Macclesfield Psalter was created in East Anglia around 1330. It is lavishly illustrated, with many of the marginal illustrations having a cartoonish quality like the picture of an archer at the foot of folio 111r where he has a very naturalistic body, arms and head, but happens to have lower body and legs of a large bird. This birdman archer has just released an arrow from a relatively short bow. The arrow has triangular head with a noticeable spine and a bulbous nock like those in the *Luttrell Psalter*. The position of the fingers of the right hand is very naturalistic for an archer releasing an arrow.

The most significant illustration showing archery equipment is that of St Edmund of Bury on folio 1r where he is holding the instrument of his martyrdom, an arrow. While the arrow is drawn too large in proportion to the saint for symbolic emphasis, it is a very straightforward representation which fits in with arrows in other manuscripts of the time. It has relatively short shield-shaped fletches and a broad triangular barbed head with a noticeable spine. The nock is the most interesting feature, being very clearly drawn as wider than the arrow shaft, bulbous shaped with a nock groove cut into this bulb. A join line is drawn between the shaft and the bulbous nock, implying that the nock was made separately from the arrow shaft so that it could be made wider for greater strength. Some of drawings of arrows in other manuscripts also seem to have a join line between the bulbous nock and the shaft, but this is by far the clearest.[18]

The Holkham Picture Book Bible is a particularly intriguing manuscript probably created in London somewhere between 1327 and 1340.[19] It is almost a cartoon of selected books of the Bible, Genesis, the Gospels and Revelation, with a commentary in Norman French. Like the other manuscripts created in the first four decades of the fourteenth century, the pictures in the Holkham Bible show high levels of observation and detail. It is possible that it was created as a pattern book for wall paintings but it remains something of a mystery.[20] Folio 40 has two battle pictures connected with Judgement Day, one shows two kings and their knights fighting, the other ordinary men fighting using swords, axes, bucklers, bows and arrows. The two archers have bows about ‘an ell and a half’ in length, like some of those shown in the butts picture in the Lutterell Psalter. These bows are very knobbly, look relatively thick in the hand and seem to be used with a short draw, maybe about 24in. This draw length fits with the length of the arrow found at Waterford described below. The arrows have big barbed heads and triangular fletchings whipped on to the shafts. Whether the artist is telling us that the short draw bow and big triangular arrowheads were commonly used in warfare in the first

few decades of the fourteenth century, or that this was the sort of archery equipment he had seen ordinary men use is uncertain. But these two possibilities are not mutually exclusive: it may be that the ordinary archer assessed at the Views of Arms brought this sort of equipment to the View, and that many of the archers carried this sort of bows and arrows to war in the early fourteenth century. The size of the bow in the archers' hands in this picture would suggest that the bow was relatively powerful and so could be effective, particularly against the lightly protected Scots.

The Smithfield Decretals is probably of the latest of the manuscripts discussed here, dating to about 1340. It differs from the other manuscripts in that the archers in it all use man length bows, true longbows. One illustration shows two archers on the sterncastle of a ship shooting big barbed arrows at an enemy ship. They are drawing their 'longbows' to the ear. The other illustration is of a man with a fairly massive bow shooting at a cockerel. Like the Luttrell picture the stance of the archer is realistic, and the representation of both the bow and the arrow catches the attention. While not making too much of the observational skill and realism of the artist, it is noteworthy that the bow is coloured pale on the back and a rich golden brown on the belly, and so appears to be a representation of a yew bow. The arrow could well be a representation of a bird bolt such as occurs in some of the legal records found in the chapter on hunting. It is clearly a specialist arrow for use against small game and birds, with a blunt 'boss' behind the point to ensure the target was knocked down. The representation of the nock is very similar to that in the Queen Mary Psalter.

The most significant question raised by these illustrations is not the varying lengths of bow shown, but the arrow nocks. Were many arrows made at this time with bulbous nocks? These appear to have had a groove to enable them to sit securely against the bowstring, rather than a true nock slot. In some illustrations there is the suggestion that these bulbous nocks were made separate from the main part of the arrow shaft, a sensible practice that would reduce the work of whittling down the arrowshaft. The only complete arrow that has been found from this period, the one found at twelfth century Waterford described below, is reported as having a notch for the bowstring. This does not sound like a full nock slot that the bowstring fits into, as later arrows have, but just a notch to centre the string on the arrow. This could have been similar to purpose of the apparent groove in the bulbous nocks. This question comes back to how accurate do we believe these manuscript artists were? They had a tendency to exaggerate the arrowheads, and may have done the same with the arrow nocks. But, if these pictures of bulbous nocks were

accurate, did it mean that they were made this way to sit against relatively thick bowstrings? That is, were the bowstrings many men used thick because they didn't have access to craftsmen stringers, or because they were the cheapest quality strings?

There are very few church wall paintings dating to no later than the middle of the fourteenth century that portray archery, and all are representations of the martyrdom of St Edmund. Little is known of Edmund, ninth-century king of East Anglia, except that he was defeated and killed by the Danes in 869. The monastic accounts tell that Edmund staunchly refused to either give up his faith and worship the Norse gods or rule East Anglia as an ally of the Danes so they shot him to death with arrows. The earliest wall painting can be found at Fritton near Great Yarmouth and dates to the twelfth century.[21] Unfortunately it is so faint now that it is impossible to see much detail of the archers, except that they are using short-draw bows, right handed archers drawing to their left breast. Two more paintings of the martyrdom date from the first half of the fourteenth century, one at Stoke Dry in Rutland and the other at Bishopsbourne in Kent (se plate 10 and 11). The first is not very realistic with an archer on each side of St Edmund who have each shot up to ten very neatly drawn arrows into the saint's sides. The bows are barely man length, and just a smooth curve. It tells us very little about archery because of its very unsophisticated nature. The Bishopsbourne painting is much nearer to the realism shown in the manuscript illustrations of the period, but does not match the *Luttrell Psalter* for example in this regard. As is common for paintings of St Edmund's martyrdom, there is an archer on each side of the saint. In this painting the saint is shown twisted in agony from the arrowstrike. The archers have their bows at full draw ready to loose. The bows are perhaps man length and rough finished. The archers have drawn them to their left breast, so despite the relative length of the bow, the shooting technique is still a short draw. The arrows have shield-shaped fletchings, very prominent nocks, and exaggerated broadheads. These pictures may suggest that in the archery practised by the common man up to the first half of the fourteenth century the short draw was the norm. This agrees with the evidence of arrow length found in legal records and at Waterford. The picture of St Edmund's martyrdom at Troston in Suffolk probably dates to the second half of the fourteenth century. The archer is using a long draw, perhaps (and this is very tentative) reflecting the wider development of this technique through military archery.

Finally there are two remarkable floor tiles. One is in the Chapter House of Westminster Abbey which dates to about 1255. It is currently thought to have been made to the order of Henry III for his Palace of Westminster, and used in the Chapter House because it was

surplus to requirements for the Palace.[22] It shows a hunter who has just shot a stag with a barbed arrow (see plate 4). His bow is of middle length, perhaps an ell and a half in medieval terms, and very clearly a rough self bow. He has three arrows with bulbous knocks in a short quiver at his belt. Again the arrowheads are exaggerated beyond the demands of the medium. The bowstring shows the impossibility of doing a fine line in the glazes of the time. The other comes from Newark Priory and is now in the British Museum collection. It is a much simpler picture tile showing an archer with a short bow drawn to his chest. The fletches of a bundle of arrows stuck in his belt can also be seen. It is English and was made in the thirteenth century; the design is labelled 'Westminster School' in the catalogue.[23]

The fourth type of artistic representation of archery is carving in both wood and stone. These are not common in medieval England at all, and examples made before 1350 are particularly rare. While this may be an accident of survival, it more likely arises from archery being less part of the image of England before Edward III's victories than was the case afterwards. The only example in stone I've found is a rather contorted archer on a door pillar at the west end of Lincoln Cathedral (see plate 3). It is a strange mixture of the real, the way the bowstring is wrapped about the nocks for example, and the probably unreal, the draw for example. Woodcarving on misericords includes more examples of archery, but most of the survivors date to later than 1350. Misericords in Ely and Gloucester Cathedrals are the exceptions to this. Ely Cathedral has a fine set of misericaords dating to the 1340s. One shows St Giles comforting a deer that was his companion in the forests (see plate 15). The deer has been wounded by huntsmen and an archer is carved to left and right of the main carving of the saint. The archers have shortish bows, maybe a yard and a half in length. Two misericords in Gloucester Cathedral also show archers and date to the 1350s. One shows a hunter and a stag. While it is contorted to fit the space, the archer is clearly using a longbow with a two-fingered loose, and the arrows have crescent-shaped nocks, possibly a more sophisticated version of the bulbous nocks noted in other representations (see plate 1). This is the only misericord archer dating to the first half of the fourteenth century using a longbow; all the others have shortish bows. This may suggest that the carver had seen foresters and huntsmen using longbows whereas ordinary men often used shorter, less powerful bows. A second misericord at Gloucester shows a peasant about to shoot at a fox which has been driven into a tree by dogs. He is using a shortish bow and may have a boult in his belt, commonly used in medieval England to shoot small game (see plate 14).

The Archaeology of Archery between the Norman Conquest and the Black Death

In tune with the rest of this book, only archaeological evidence relating to hand bows and their arrows will be included in this chapter, that relating to crossbows is left out as far as possible. The only certain physical evidence of actual archery equipment used in England and Wales in the years between the Norman Conquest and the Black Death that has been found so far are arrowheads discovered by well-ordered archaeological digs and in much more random finds made by gardeners, antiquarians, field walkers and metal detectorists.

There have been two finds in England belonging to the period which may be bows. A yew bow about 49in (1.245m) long was found during excavations at Berkhamstead Castle in 1931. The precise age of this find is uncertain since it was found in the mud in the moat, but it belongs to the period under consideration in this book. This find is now considered to be the prod of a crossbow rather than evidence of the continued use of short bows.[24] The other is much more tentative. During excavations in 1966 in Southampton pieces of an ash stave were found in a context dated no later than 1338. The initial reports referred to these as being parts of a bow stave although a later review of medieval Southampton is less specific.[25] However, several finds of bows or parts of bows dating firmly to the period have been made in Ireland. While these finds are geographically outside the scope of this book, they belong to the archery tradition considered within it since they were found in contexts connected with Anglo Norman invasions of Ireland in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. As is well known these Anglo Norman invaders came in part from among the Marcher barons and included South Welsh infantry, a good number of whom were archers. Giraldus Cambrensis leaves a graphic account of the effect of these archers had on the Irish fighting men opposing them, 'paralysed and panic stricken by … the sudden wounds inflicted by our arrows.'[26]

Excavations at Waterford between 1986 and 1992 found one complete bow and pieces of perhaps six others dating somewhere in the second half of the twelfth century and first half of the thirteenth century. The complete bow is *c*.49.2in (1.25m) long, and while it is difficult to make any comments about the length of the bows the fragments came from, it is considered likely that they were of similar length. The bows were all made of yew, have self nocks and most have some finishing or shaping on the limb tips. Some of the finds also exploit the characteristics of yew that makes it such an excellent bow wood, with most of the stave consisting of resilient heartwood and a thin layer of elastic sapwood left on the back (side of the bow facing

away from the archer) to strengthen the bow. Since the arrowheads found with the bows belonged to military types, the excavators consider that the bows were also military in purpose.[27] The relatively short length of the bow, compared at least with the later English and Welsh warbows, fits well with the apparent length of the bows in the Bayeux Tapestry and and some of the manuscript illustrations of this period.

Many of the arrowheads found in contexts of similar date to the bows have external socket diameters of 8–9mm suggesting light arrows when compared with socket diameters of arrowheads associated with English military archery of the fourteenth–sixteenth centuries. One arrowshaft with head in place was also found at Waterford. This measured about 23.6in (60cm) in length including the head and was *c*.9mm at the head end tapering to maybe half that towards the nock end. Unfortunately the shaft completely collapsed when the attempt was made to excavate it.[28] These finds give a valuable insight into two traditions of archery, the Hiberno Norse tradition and Anglo Norman military archery. The bow and arrowheads found in similar contexts are considered to belong to the Anglo Norman period, and as a result could be used to comment on the tradition of Anglo Norman military archery in England and Wales. This military tradition of archery does not exist in isolation from the practice of archery in the wider society of the time. Evidence of the effectiveness of these shorter bows in military use may well be found in the accounts of warfare in the reign of King Stephen given elsewhere. There is also a later Irish account of their effectiveness. A visitor to Ireland in 1397 described a company of horsemen serving the O' Neill king of Tir Eoghain saying 'and some make use of bows, which are as short as half a bow of England; but they shoot as far as the English ones.'[29] Although this account dates to after the period that this book considers, it says two things very clearly. Firstly, the English warbow was long by the end of the fourteenth century, nothing new there, but useful contemporary confirmation. More interestingly it says that some Irish fighting men used a shorter bow, approximately similar to the one found at Waterford, and that these had a range to rival the bigger English bows. As the arrowheads found in Ireland make clear, these smaller bows shot smaller arrows, and would therefore have much less impact than the larger, heavier arrow shot from an English warbow.

In the absence of any definite finds of bows in England and Wales before the Tudor period it is necessary to look at arrowheads, since they are the only archery-related material available for the period. This review of some of the medieval arrowheads found in England concentrates on civilian sites because the purpose is to discover

evidence of popular archery rather than military archery. Arrowheads tell us a good deal about the purpose of the archery practised at their find location, since specialised types of arrowhead developed for military, hunting and general use. Conclusions about the power of the bow they were used with can be drawn from the socket diameter.

While iron or steel arrowheads survive better than organic archery equipment such as bows, arrow shafts, bowstrings or bracers, corrosion and chance have ensured that we can only find a relatively small number of arrowheads of those made and used between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries. This account will concentrate on those found in archaeological excavations since the date that the arrowhead was in use can usually be determined accurately. Oliver Jessop's 'New Artefact Typology for the Study of Medieval Arrowheads' is used to outline the function of the different heads (see plate 16), which will inform the discussion of archery probably practised at the various sites.[30] Using the typology in another way, to date unstratified arrowheads by their type, can only be done very tentatively because the identifying characteristics of the different types occur to differing degrees depending on the arrowsmith and the customer he was making the heads for. The typology divides socketed arrowheads into three categories: hunting, military and multi-purpose. The name of this last category is perhaps slightly misleading since it includes a number of small broad head types which would have been used by ordinary people primarily for hunting. But of course it needs to be born in mind that any arrowhead can be used for war whereas some of the needle-like military arrowheads would be relatively ineffective hunting large game animals like deer.

Villages, Manors and Small Towns

The extensive study of the site of the deserted village of Wharram Percy in North Yorkshire has uncovered few arrowheads. Two were found in what the excavators called 'the South Manor Area'. One is an MP7, a triangular barbed head with a socket *c*.8mm in diameter. This was dated to between the mid-thirteenth century and into the fourteenth century; although the typology would suggest that it belongs to the early part of this span. The other has a corroded socket but was probably of similar diameter and is a specialised military head, an M6, which is a short thin point to go through the rings of chain mail. Both the archaeology and the typology date this one to any point in the period under discussion in the book.[31] Two other heads were found in among the ordinary houses in layers dating to between the late thirteenth century and the late fourteenth century. One is a M7 a long (about 90mm) needle point with a socket of about

10–11mm in diameter, clearly showing that at least one villager practised military archery on occasion. Since this type is only found in thirteenth-century contexts it is probable that this was in fighting against the Scots. The other is a conical point which depending on find circumstances can be military or just a practice head.[32] It is not certain that this one dates to the first half of the fourteenth century since this type continued in use until the sixteenth century. A third head with a flat diamond-shaped point (MP5) was found in a context belonging to late in the fourteenth century, although the typology records this type of head as much earlier. The socket of this head isn't neatly wrapped over, perhaps suggesting that the local smith made it rather than someone who regularly made arrowheads. This head may demonstrate that popular archery, which might involve fewer professional craftsmen in the manufacture of the equipment, was more conservative than noble or military archery. This old-fashioned head would be perfectly effective shooting game for the pot.

Beverley in Yorkshire has produced a small collection of arrowheads which includes two surprisingly large heads. One of these is a flat diamond shaped head about 80mm long with a socket diameter of *c*.12mm, the other is a very long, narrow barbed head with a similar size socket. Both were found in twelfth-century contexts. They may be very rare evidence that points to the presence at this early date of a highly skilled archer who used a powerful bow or be crossbow heads given the socket diameter and date. The other arrowheads belonging to the period under consideration fall into two pairs. Two are triangular bladed MP3 heads found in twelfth-century contexts; most probably for hunting. The other two are needle pointed M6 types of about 65mm in length designed to go through chainmail.

Three of the arrows have socket diameters of *c*.8mm, one of military heads having a larger socket 10–11mm in diameter.[33]

Bordesley Abbey near Redditch was the site of an industrial metal working complex which relied on local waterpower to do the larger scale work.[34] Excavations there imply that the complex made iron goods for military use since a caltrop was discovered along with a number of military arrowheads. These include three M4 heads (LMMC type 16) sharply pointed with close-fitting barbs. This type of head seems to have developed in the fourteenth century, so given the context within the excavations they came from, they must have been made early in the century. They differ a little from the common form of this head by having a socket which extends well clear of the small barbs. The socket diameters of two of them are *c*.8mm, while the third is slightly larger, *c*.10mm. A hint at the way this head type developed comes from a fourth head of the type found in a later context, dating to mid-fourteenth century to early fifteenth century. This one is bigger

overall with a short socket that barely extends beyond the barbs, and an internal socket dimension of *c*.11mm. While it very slight evidence to draw conclusions from, this may suggest that military arrows were being made on larger shafts to cope with more powerful warbows later in the fourteenth century, a trend clearly demonstrated by finds of Tudor military arrowheads,. It is reasonable to suggest that warbows increased in power through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to reflect the greater practised ability of the archers and to try to counter improvements in armour. Two conical MP9 heads were also found, one from the early fourteenth century, the other from a later context. These may be very short versions of the needle points made since the eleventh century to penetrate chainmail. If so they demonstrate an alternative form of military arrowhead to the well-known M6 and M7 described above. But these heads are more commonly considered as practice heads designed to make it easier to recover an arrow from the practice target, and are more frequently found in later contexts. A broad leaf-shaped head was also found in a later context.

The medieval village of Seacourt, now in Oxfordshire, is interesting because excavators not only found arrowheads but also provided some evidence of what the arrows might have been used for. Two of the arrowheads are larger flat bladed heads, one triangular and one diamond shaped. The other two are small M4 type with small barbs. All the arrowheads have small sockets, no more than 8–9mm at most. Two of the arrows, one M4 and the diamond-shaped head were dated to the thirteenth century while the other two were definitely pre 1400 but could not be precisely dated. The excavators also found among the various animal bones in the village site bones that showed that the villagers had killed and eaten at least three red deer and one roe deer between the late thirteenth century and the late fourteenth century. So, late in the period under consideration, there was at least one active poacher living in the village who may have exploited the nearby forest and parks of Wychwood or Woodstock.[35]

A long series of excavations at Thetford and in surrounding areas that would have been open land both cultivated and uncultivated in medieval times, have uncovered a good range of iron objects including arrowheads. Most seem to have had small sockets of around 8mm. There are five heads with flat triangular or diamond-shaped heads which were dated mainly to the late eleventh century or the twelfth century, one of which has a larger socket of *c*.10mm diameter. There are two MP2 heads which are interesting because while they were made to fit small arrowshafts between 6mm and 8mm and have small barbed heads, they have very long sockets and shanks, perhaps as much as 80mm. Since these heads would be relatively heavy, the

arrow would be unbalanced and heavy at the head end which would affect its performance at anything but fairly short range. These heads could have been developed in an attempt to increase the strike and penetration of hunting arrows. Four needle-pointed M2 military heads have been found, the socket size of which bear comparison with the military heads found at Waterford. Finally, one very typical example of a small barbed MP8 has been found dating to the middle of the thirteenth century. Overall the assemblage reflects the two aspects to life in Anglo Norman towns. Since Thetford had a substantial motte and bailey castle the proportion of military arrowheads is unsurprising. The number of arrowheads designed predominantly for hunting reflects the interests of noble Anglo Normans and their households, rather than providing evidence per se of hunting by the general population of Thetford.[36] As has been noted elsewhere, the penalties prescribed by Forest Law for unauthorized hunting were ferocious in the twelfth century, so it was much more likely that any bow hunting that occurred at that time was by the local noble household rather than by the general local population as might have been the case in later centuries.

Finally, the assemblages of arrowheads found in two manor house complexes demonstrate very clearly the role of archery in small noble households after the Norman Conquest. The Normans developed the site of an Anglo-Saxon hall at Goltho in Lincolnshire into a motte and bailey castle in about 1080. The Anglo-Saxon hall site dated back to the mid ninth century and had been steadily developed thereafter. Twenty-one arrowheads were found in extensive excavations of the site of the hall and castle and associated dwellings. Specialist military arrowheads outnumbered other types to a very marked extent, and all bar two of the arrowheads came from post Conquest contexts. Twelve M7, long very thin needle points for penetrating chainmail, were discovered in varying states of preservation, the best examples being about 150mm long, and the socket dimensions were perhaps between 8mm and 10mm. Two M6 heads, similar in purpose to the spectacular M7 heads but more robust and much shorter, the longer one of the two would have been about 70mm long at least originally. Because of corrosion it difficult to estimate the socket size, although one might have a socket *c*.10mm in diameter. The remaining heads are mostly flat, lozenge shaped MP3 and MP5 types, but one is a small triangular MP2 type. Few of these are in a condition to estimate the socket size, although two might have been about 10mm in diameter, while the MP2 was about 6mm.[37] The excavators proposed an end date for the site they worked on of *c*.1150 in the last years of Stephen's reign, often called the Anarchy. This may explain the nature of the collection of arrowheads found, specialist military heads predominate and the

size of the sockets perhaps slightly larger than the military arrow found at Waterford. It is reasonable to suggest from this evidence that there had been at least one practised military archer, and almost certainly more in the garrison. Members of the garrison may also have hunted locally, although the broader heads could also be used in war.

The second manor site is at Faccombe Netherton in Hampshire, where over forty arrowheads have been found in excavations.[38] This collection is a complete contrast with that found at Goltho since it includes a large proportion of large specialist hunting heads and relatively few military types. Some of the military heads may date to the second half of the fourteenth century and so are outside the scope of this book. The main feature of the collection is the number of big hunting heads with long barbs, H3 and H4 types, often called swallowtails, most of which were found in layers dating between 1280 and 1356. The largest of these as they have come out of the ground were about 100mm long and the same across the barbs at the widest point. A good number of smaller triangular and barbed heads also associated with hunting throughout the twelfth to fourteenth centuries have been found as well. Many of these arrowheads, both the big hunting heads and the smaller ones, belong to a phase of the site dating from 1280–1356. Four military heads with small barbs close to the socket (M4) were found in the same phase. Five MP9 heads were also found in this phase. As has already been noted in the discussion of the finds from Boardsley Abbey, these may be small military heads but are more usually considered to be practice heads. Taken together these varied types of arrowhead make an emphatic statement that archery was a significant activity in what was probably the last phase of substantial habitation of the manor. Coin finds support the suggestion that the first half of the fourteenth century was a time of great activity at Faccombe. The large swallowtails have the largest socket diameters unsurprisingly, three have socket diameters of about 11mm. The socket sizes of the hunting heads relate fairly closely to the overall size and weight of the heads, with none from this phase, as far as one can tell in their current state, being smaller than about 8mm. The number of the various heads in this phase suggests that there was number of people hunting with bows and arrows, some of whom were capable of using heavy bows. If the MP9 are taken as practice heads, this also suggests people were at Faccombe for long enough times in this same phase to enjoy a bit of archery practice for entertainment and to hone their skills. Some idea of the scale of the hunting activities at Faccombe at this time has already been noted in the chapter on hunting. The most fascinating find from Faccombe was a fallow deer skull with an arrowhead embedded in it. The arrowhead has long barbs swept back beyond the end of the socket and is about

100mm from end to end and about 65mm wide at the end of the barbs. The head penetrated the skull to a depth of just over 30mm at a point where the skull was 7.8mm thick.[39] The archaeologists considered that the shot would not have been fatal, but there can be no doubt that it would have stopped the deer. This arrowhead has a socket about 10–11mm in diameter, so would be part of a heavy arrow requiring a heavy bow to be effective. While one can never be certain, the design of the head, with barbs sweeping back beyond the socket makes it less likely to be from a crossbow bolt. While negative evidence from an excavation does not prove a point conclusively, no artifacts associated with crossbows were found at Faccombe, so it seems reasonable to take this skull as evidence of the presence of a skilled archer using a heavy bow. The date of this find is particularly thought provoking. The skull was found in a pit containing bones from at least thirty-three deer, twenty-two red, three fallow and eight roe, which dated to between 1160 and 1180.[40] Whether all the deer were killed on one large hunt or in a series of hunts is uncertain, but the archaeologists did not report any evidence of the pit being left open between deposits. So if killed in a series of hunts these must have been fairly close together in time, perhaps all in the same season. This date is earlier than Jessop suggested for the start of this type of head. The presence of this arrowhead makes it very likely that one of the nobles or one of the huntsmen hunting at Faccombe manor was skilled with a heavy bow at a time well before Statutes in England encouraged archery. If we draw parallels from the bows found in Ireland, this need be no surprise since a yew bow nearly 75in (*c*.1.90m) long dating to the tenth century was found at Ballinderry, associated with Viking equipment.[41] The Viking tradition of using longbows had had over two centuries to become part of the archery tradition of England.

Cities

Excavations at Winchester, York and Norwich have discovered arrowheads from the centuries following the Conquest to as late as the sixteenth century. In York in particular arrowheads predating the Conquest have also been discovered in part reflecting its importance to the Norse inhabitants of England for two centuries. Since this book looks at the period between the Norman Conquest and the Black Death, not all the arrowheads found in these cities will be discussed.

Only one of the arrows found at Winchester is a military head, an M7 found in an eleventh to mid-twelfth-century context.[42] An MP8 with very short barbs dating to the mid-thirteenth century could be military but this type is more commonly considered to be a popular hunting head. Otherwise there are a number of triangular or lozenge-

shaped MP2, MP3 or MP5 heads and a few leaf-shaped MP4 heads. The majority of these heads, including the M7, have socket diameters between 8mm and 9mm. Two MP2s are larger with flaring sockets of between 10mm and 11mm and the MP8 is of similar size. Just as the finding of the arrow-pierced skull at Faccombe Manor showed the reality of medieval hunting, one arrowhead found at Winchester raises intriguing questions. A large flat barbed head, similar to the MP7 type was found embedded in a human vertebra in a stone coffin dating to the mid to late eleventh century. The socket diameter was around 10mm so the arrow is likely to have been used with a substantial bow, although quite possibly not one comparable in power to the later warbows. This misfortune is most likely to have befallen the victim after the Conquest, but it could predate it by maybe a decade. Is this more graphic proof of the dangers of hunting, reminiscent of the fate of William Rufus?

Excavations at Norwich have recovered very few arrowheads of the period under consideration, and probably because of the presence of an important castle the majority are military. Four damaged M7 and one M6 have been found; only the M6 is in any condition to even estimate the socket size, it being about 9mm in diameter. Two other heads have been found in thirteenth-century contexts, a small M8 and an MP5. Both have relatively small sockets.[43] Even allowing for the element of serendipity in finding iron artifacts in archaeological excavations, the lack of clearly non-military arrowheads from Norwich is intriguing.

Forty-four arrowheads have been recovered so far in excavations at York. These range from a tanged head that is considered to be residual from pre Conquest times through to some military heads dating to the mid to late fifteenth century. The heads come from all three functional groups, although specialist hunting heads are rarest. The military heads belong to the M6 and M8 types, typically relatively thin heads designed to penetrate chainmail. All these are more robust than the often extremely long needle pointed M7 type that has been discussed above. There are two types of specialist hunting head: one H5, the blunt head that can be found in various shapes throughout the period, and was used to knock down birds and small game. Arrows fitted with these heads were known as boults in medieval records and law. The others are at least three examples of a type also found at Faccombe Manor and at Winchester which are a form of the H3 type. These are all big broadheads with long barbs sweeping back besides the socket. As they are now the socket diameter ranges between about 10mm and 12mm. The others include arrowheads which have triangular, lozenge or rarely leaf-shaped blades and belong to various multi-purpose categories.[44] As might be expected, only the big specialist hunting

heads consistently have relatively large sockets. The socket diameters of these multi-purpose heads ranges between about 8mm and 10mm, as far as it is possible to estimate from their condition.

Finds of arrowheads made on castle sites are not reviewed here because it is very difficult to be sure they tell us anything about the tradition of popular archery. They very clearly show the use of military archery, more of a specialist activity in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries than it became in the fourteenth century. Finds from Helmsley castle in Yorkshire demonstrate this very clearly; about thirty M7 and M8 needle-point military heads which seem to have gone out of use by the first half of the fourteenth century were found in the excavations of the 1920s whereas only one MP8 was found. Although these arrowheads were not well dated by the excavators the predominance of this type of military arrowhead fits well with the development of the castle by the de Roos family up to the fourteenth century, and the need to deal with invading Scots at the same time.

Bowyers, Fletchers and Arrowsmiths

How and when did the archery industry develop in the years after the Norman Conquest? By the 1330s, more evidence begins to be available of the activities of an archery industry made up of craftsmen such as bowyers, fletchers, stringers and arrowsmiths, and of merchants importing materials such as bowstaves and arrow shafts to support the craftsmen. By the fifteenth century this industry was well developed, stimulated by half a century of warfare which depended on the acquisition of large amounts of equipment for military archery.[45] But before the 1330s there are very few references to the craftsmen who made bows and arrows. There are even fewer references to the harvesting of appropriate timber from the forests of England or importing bowstaves and arrow shafts before this time.

In the centuries before Edward III's reign, there are a few references to men making their own arrows, particularly for hunting, some of which have been recounted earlier in this book. But I have discovered no clear references to men making their own bows. This is not to say they didn't, just that there is no trace of the activity. Why? Most references to the ownership and use of bows and arrows come from court records. The court recorders had no interest in who had made a bow used in an offence unless it had a bearing on the offence or the guilt or innocence of the alleged perpetrator. Arrow making is mentioned in some cases since it seems that the owner of an arrow could be identified from the arrow itself.

Among the records of the inquisitions held in Edward I's reign one from 1286 recorded that:

> … the fletcher of Roulesley twice had timber for arrows and bird bolts [*trillabos*] from the said park – ie that of William of Hambleton [Dean of St Peter's York] near Hokenaston and Braylesford [Brailesford in Derbyshire?]. The arrows being prepared and rounded [*circumcise* – often used to denote coin clipping at this date, but slightly later meant to separate or cut off] at the manor of William de Hambleton and split [*fisse*] there and carried away by the said fletcher.[46]

While this record is tantalising because it makes no mention of the type of tree the fletcher took, it is interesting in the way it outlines the process the fletcher used to get his arrow shafts.

Sometimes the records of the services required in return for a landholding took account of the landholder's craft, providing evidence of fletchers, arrowsmiths and general blacksmithing. One example concerns an arrowsmith in the Forest of Dean, which was an important source of arrows and crossbow bolts in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Thomas de Laforge (Thomas of the forge) presented the 200 arrows owed for his landholding at Upton to the Earl of Gloucester at St Briavels Castle in 1232.[47] If the scribe was being precise, his use of the word *sagittas* in this record makes it clear Thomas owed hand bow arrows rather than crossbow bolts. Another example is less precise recording that in the same year Hulina, the wife of Radulf the Fletcher gave twenty *flechias* as rental for a landholding in Lincolnshire.[48] The question is, what did Hulina give? *Flechias* could mean literally just fletchings, which would seem a very slight payment; but it also meant arrowshafts, fletched or unfletched. Given Radulf's job, it is possible that these were fletched arrows without heads, since it was not uncommon in the Middle Ages for arrows to be supplied without heads. When John the Fletcher died in 1251, the inquisition recorded that he held 80 acres directly from the king, one fifth of which were woodland, in Braddeley in Lincolnshire. For this he owed a rent of twenty arrows annually. It is possible that the woodland was coppiced to be a source of arrowshafts for John. An inquisition of 1288 records the holdings of William de Ferrars, Earl of Derby. Among his landholdings was the manor of Groby in Leicestershire which was within the bounds of the forest of Charnwood. The rents Ferrars received yearly from this manor included six dozen arrowheads.[49] Given the quantity, and the location of the manor within a forest which could produce quantities of charcoal for smelting and smithing, this looks like a rent paid one or more iron workers and arrowsmiths. By 1293, John of Braddeley held land in Leicestershire including '8 acres of wood held of a certain serjeantry (tenancy) which Ralph the Fletcher sometime held of the

king by service of rendering 20 arrows yearly at the Exchequer.'[50]

There are two records where the link to archery-related crafts was less explicit. John Baudet died in 1258 and held one hide directly from the king, in the county of Southampton for an annual rent of 100 barbed arrows. As has already been noted, a hide was not a precise land area but this would have been large enough for John Baudet to feed his family and have a surplus for sale or to support a household that might include labourers helping to produce arrows. While the Inquisition record does not say that John was a fletcher or arrowsmith it is very likely since he owed such as large number of arrows as rent each year. As the inquisition record after his son and heir Elias's death makes clear, the terms of this landholding were closely tied to the needs of the king's household on their regular trips to hunt in the New Forest. When Elias died 1319–20 aged nearly 80, the terms of the tenancy had changed to the payment of fifty barbed arrowheads to the king 'on his coming beyond the bridge at Redbrigge towards the New Forest.'[51]

Reginald of Colwick, who died in 1252, took his name from his landholding in Colwick, just east of Nottingham. For this he had to deliver twelve iron arrowheads to the king whenever he came to Nottingham. By 1275 when his heir Philip died aged at least 63, the rent had become twelve barbed arrows without fletches whenever the king came to Nottingham. In 1333 William of Colwick died, owing a rent of twelve barbed arrows to be presented annually at Nottingham Castle. Philip's heir was named William, but if there are no missing records, the William who died in 1333 was about 86 at his death.[52] It is interesting to note the evolution of this rent from a very general payment of arrowheads, which may suggest that Reginald had an involvement in smithing, into a requirement to supply complete barbed arrows for royal hunting.

Another record suggests that bows may have been made by general woodworkers within a household. The Abbey of St Mary's in Furness had a charter granted by King John and confirmed in the Forest Eyre of Lancaster forest held in 1334–6 which allowed the Abbot take timber from the forest. This charter specified that he could take the timber needed to the Abbey's manor at Beaumont, 'for other necessary provisions, that is to say fuel, wagons, carts, ploughs, pales, yokes, bows and for enclosure.'[53] These bows could have been for hunting or military service by lay tenants of the Abbey under the Statute of Winchester or just self-defence. The right to take wood for bows is specified because the Abbey's location, within the bounds of Lancaster Forest. This meant that the ownership of bows was restricted by the Forest Law, so this specific allowance of taking wood for bows could imply a licence for the residents of the Abbey's manor at Beaumont to

own bows. The granting of this right makes it clear that at this time bows for both military and non-military use could be made of common English forest trees. While these might include yew, it would be most likely that other trees such as elm or ash were used.

A few civil records of the thirteenth century mention members of the various archery crafts. In Coventry in the early 1280s Henry le Bouhestgrengere and his wife Matilda held a joint tenancy. In about 1290, Matilda Bowestrengmakere held a tenancy in her own right, perhaps continuing in her husband's trade as a widow[54]. But the city of York provides the earliest evidence of a bowyer becoming a prominent citizen, when John of St Botolphs became a freeman of the city in 1276.[55] John's registration as a Freeman would have signified that he was a well-established craftsman, so it reasonable to suggest that he had been a recognised bowyer for maybe ten years at least before his registration. Another record of a craftsman is found in the record of the tax owed by the estate of William the Bowyer who died in 1301. He does not seem to have been a wealthy man since all that is recorded is a bronze pot worth 2/-, a basin worth 6*d* and bowstaves worth 2/-.[56] The record is frustratingly brief giving no idea of how many bowstaves had a combined value of 2/-, nor what sort of wood they were.

More evidence implying the activities of bowyers can be found in records of 1289, when an order for eight bows for the Queen's Foresters at Feckenham forest was made by Peter de la Mare, the Constable of Bristol Castle.[57] He paid 11/6*d* for these bows, or about 17*d* each. As has already been noted, this was good price to pay for a bow at the time and is evidence that some royal foresters at least used good-quality heavy bows similar to military bows of the 1340s.

At the same time evidence from records of rentals paid in kind and another royal order put a much lower value, 6*d*, on aubourn bows. This was the 'market' price for aubourn bows in the late thirteenth century recorded in an order of 1285 for six aubourn bows bought for Welsh archers in the employ of the king.[58] This may suggest that the bows bought for the Feckenham foresters were longbows of good quality, quite possibly made of yew some of which may have been imported. It is unlikely that all military-quality longbows were yew in the late thirteenth century since court records of the time mentioned yew bows specifically, which may suggest that they were still relatively uncommon. On the other hand, aubourn was sufficiently appreciated as a bow wood that it was also specified on occasion. As with yew there is no evidence that aubourn bow staves were particularly common, and the usual size of the tree makes it unlikely that there would ever be many long aubourn bows. The mention of them as rent may suggest that they were suited for amateur use for

sport or hunting. However, this does not explain why the King's Welsh archers were given them. The modern laburnum (the usual translation of aubourn) bow made by Lars Persson (see picture section) demonstrates that even relatively short bows of this wood can have surprising power and performance. However, his bows haven't been in use long enough to tell how durable they are in comparison with a yew bow. So, considering the availability of the different bow woods in the late thirteenth century it is reasonable to suggest that yew was still comparatively rare then since the import trade had yet to develop to any significant scale. But as the fourteenth century progressed this trade grew rapidly. As yew bowstaves became more commonly available this might explain why aubourn was specified as a bow wood in the thirteenth century, but seemed to vanish from the record in later centuries.

While the large orders for bows and arrows made by the royal administration through the sheriffs in the 1340s and 1350s make it clear that there were craftsmen bowyers, fletchers and arrowsmiths in many counties, it is unusual to get any insight into how these orders were to be achieved. One record from 1337 gives an idea of how these orders were collected. Nicholas Coraunt (also known as Caraud) the King's Artiller, was ordered:

> … to purvey at the king's charges in the counties of Essex, Hertford, Surrey, Sussex and Middlesex all the bows and arrows which he shall find ready made in the hands or custody of workmen, to have other bows and arrows made with all speed and to enjoin the workmen in the king's name to be diligent in making these, laying aside all other business … and to pay a fair price.[59]

Nicholas was an important official probably based in the Tower of London, who had the responsibility for finding the equipment necessary for the archers in the king's army. In this case he was using the longstanding, and unpopular, system of purveyance, namely compulsory purchase of supplies necessary for the king's armies. It is noteworthy that this document instructs Nicholas to pay a fair price, dealing with one major objection to the practice of purveyance in that the market price for goods seized was not often paid. Two other objections to purveyance remained; namely *when* the craftsmen would be paid and the disruption caused to their normal business. In the following year Nicholas was ordered:

> … to buy 1,000 bows, 4,000 bowstrings and 4,000 sheaves of arrows of an ell in length with steel heads … and if he cannot find the full number of bows and arrows he is to buy wood for the

bows and arrows, feathers to wing the arrows with and iron and steel for their heads as may be required, to hire makers.[60]

His order stated that he was to achieve this 'within the realm', but he may well have concentrated on the counties nearest to London on purely practical grounds. The most important part of this order is the clear specification for military arrows in the late 1330s. They are to be an ell, or a yard long and be fitted with steel heads.[61] This is clear evidence that Edward III's administration demanded the use of long draw bows in war, what we would call longbows. Although the importance of steel heads for military arrows was clearly recognised at this time, it was not regularly specified in orders. This order relied on Nicholas' expertise in buying suitable wood for bows and arrows. It is probably unrealistic to believe that Nicholas would be able to find stacks of bowstaves available, although individual bowyers would have some, since there is little evidence of a substantial import trade at this date. So Nicholas may well have had to inspect timber merchants and sawyers workplaces to find ready seasoned timber such as ash or elm for the bows and ash, poplar or willow for the arrows.

If personal names can still be regarded as signifying what their owner did in the first decade of the fourteenth century, then the record that Roger le Bower of Newcastle having two stalls in St Cuthbert's parish in the Cornmarket in Lincoln in 1309 could be an early record of a professional bowyer being established in the city. Thirty-five years later he held a different piece of land in the same area. Street names are more certain indicators of the development of archery-related crafts. By about 1300 enough bowyers were working in London to have established Bowyers Row in the parish of St Martins, Ludgate.[62] By 1349 Bowyers Hill had grown up in Lincoln.[63] This latter example confirms that a substantial number of bowyers had settled in the city by the middle of the fourteenth century, something demonstrated by the scale of the orders for bows issued by the royal administration to the sheriffs of Lincolnshire between 1341 and 1359.[64] Maybe Roger was a forerunner of these later bowyers, establishing himself before the continental ambitions of the king required so many bows. It is possible that, in the first half of the fourteenth century, skilled men settled in Lincolnshire or developed the necessary skills there to be able to support the military activities in the north of England against the Scots, while living out of their raiding range.

In the Forest of Dean in this period there is evidence of deer hunting, both legal and illegal, with bows and arrows, but little for the making of bows and arrows. No doubt individuals made themselves bows and arrows, some men may have made them as part of their

working lives, but there is no evidence. This is strange since the Forest of Dean, and St Briavels Castle in particular was the site of the production of significant quantities of crossbow quarrels in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The last royal order that has survived is one from 1337.[65] As use of the longbow became the dominant form of archery in English military practice, it might have been expected that royal orders for arrows replaced those for quarrels, but this seems not to have been the case.

The legal records of the accusations of murder made against several men allegedly involved in the death of Robert de Esnyngton in 1314 recounted above include the mention of several bows, some made of imported wood. The bows include one made of Spanish yew, another bow 'called Turkeys' also made of Spanish yew; two bows of Irish yew; a bow made of elm; and a bow of unspecified wood.[66] The important point in this account is that it makes clear that at this date, bowstaves were being imported, There is no suggestion that it was in anything like the quantities found in the fifteenth century, but that it was happening regularly enough for reference to be made to Spanish and Irish yew as particular woods in use. In the light of Giraldus Cambrensis' mention of twelfth-century Welsh archers using wych elm bows and Henry VIII's legislation of 1511–12 referring to wych elm as an ordinary bow wood, it is probable that this reference to an elm bow, without any mention of the source of the wood means that elm was a standard bow wood throughout the Middle Ages. Some members of the English Warbow Society are shooting wych elm longbows that range between 90lbs and 150lbs draw weight. They find that their performance is not much less than a yew bow, but the bows are not as durable as yew bows. The mention of imported bow woods implies that men in Staffordshire had access to craftsmen bowyers, since imported bowstaves must have been relatively expensive, and so not something for an amateur to mess with. While elm is not necessarily an easier wood to make a bow from, it was much more readily available in England at this time, so this bow, and the unspecified bow, may have been made either by the archers involved or a local wood worker rather than a bowyer. But, in the end, we really don't know.

Customs records of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century give us a few scattered references to bowstaves being imported at this time. The Oak Book of Southampton, which is a collection of administrative and legal documents dating to about 1300, includes a list of the customs dues to be charged on imports. One of these dues is one of 2*d* to be paid per 100 staves for bows or crossbows (*del cent bastouns pur arcs et pur arbalstes*).[67] While this doesn't tell us how long there had been a trade in staves for both hand bows and crossbows, it

suggests that it was sufficiently well established by about 1300 to merit a specific customs charge. As the other customs records noted below make clear, merchants were importing bowstaves from Dutch, North European and Spanish ports at this time. Yew was also imported from the English kings' foreign lands in Southern France and Ireland. However, the surviving evidence suggests that these imports were on a comparatively small scale at this time. There is no evidence of Italian bowstaves being imported at this time either directly by the Genoese galleys which visited North European ports in the late thirteenth century, or indirectly through trans-European trade routes to the Dutch and German ports.[68] In 1293, eleven German and Frisian ships where driven into Scarborough by bad weather and their collective cargo included 300 bowstaves. In 1303, two ships from Dutch or Northern European ports delivered an unspecified number of bowstaves to Boston. One of these, captained by Arnald Blank, provides very clear evidence that the Northern European merchants recognised there was a good market for bowstaves in England at this early date, since the customs official recorded five merchants as importing bowstaves on the ship. In 1324 later a ship from Bayonne landed an unknown number of bowstaves at Bristol.[69] These staves may have come from the English territories in Aquitaine, but may just as easily have been Spanish.

Evidence of the importance of Spain as a source of bowstaves or even completed bows in the early part of the fourteenth century comes from an order for about 2,160 Spanish yew bows made at the orders of Edward II.[70] This order was undoubtedly for military bows and demonstrates the lengths to which English kings were prepared to go to obtain good war bows before the heyday of English and Welsh military archery. While in no way discounting the clear evidence provided by this order, it must be emphasised that there are no records that suggest that military bows were exclusively or even largely yew bows at this time. The earliest clear evidence of large-scale ordering of military bows by the royal administration comes from the 1340s and '50s, when the orders specified either white or painted bows. The difference seems to have been a matter of final finish on the bow, or without any reference to wood type.[71] The significance of these royal orders is that they show that the English kings were prepared to obtain large numbers of bows to ensure that their military archers would be effective. It is probable that these efforts made sure that longbows became the standard in England during the fourteenth century, and that the widespread use of shorter bows slowly stopped.

The Development of Bows and Arrows in Medieval

England

The bows and arrows used by the men of England developed in size and weight throughout the medieval period. The material outlined here shows some of the stages of this and, perhaps more importantly gives an idea of the time when the use of long draw longbows with shafts of 10mm+ diameter began to dominate archery as practised in England.

The evidence of the bows found in Ireland, where the conditions are regularly more conducive to the survival of organic materials fits in very well with the evidence from English manuscripts, both illustrations and descriptions in legal documents. Bows of varying lengths were used in England, and no doubt in Wales as well. There is no need to believe that there were two traditions of archery, short bow and longbow, just that people used a range of lengths of bows. Shorter bows were effective, and probably required less practise to use effectively, if only because their lighter draw weights and shorter draw lengths would have required less practice than the longbows. Evidence from the size of the sockets of some of the larger barbed arrows suggests that long bows, more powerful bows tended to be used in the eleventh, twelfth and thirteenth centuries by professional archers and by enthusiasts, who may have been noble in a number of cases. The comments made above about the Ballinderry bow are pertinent to this observation as well. Shorter bows, apparently around an ell and a half in length were used throughout the period. These would need shorter arrows as one of the legal accounts makes clear. Some of the pictorial evidence also shows the use of shorter bows that require a short draw. Many of the arrowheads and the Waterford arrow make it clear that arrows were often only 8mm or 9mm in diameter. If we think in terms of the draw length of medieval warbows, around 30in (76cm) from the *Mary Rose* evidence and longer in the practice of some modern day warbow archers, then this arrow shaft diameter is completely inadequate for the power of the bow.

If many bows in the eleventh to early fourteenth centuries were shorter with a shorter draw length, then they could have used shorter lighter arrows even if they had a draw weight of up to maybe 100lbs. This idea is particularly relevant to military archery in the period. The *Luttrell Psalter* may suggest that military bows were what we would call longbows. But, up to the fourteenth century the evidence of the arrowheads from both Ireland and England, both their overall size and particularly the socket size, suggests that the majority were used with bows lighter than the warbows of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In other words, the archery skills of the men of England

before the heyday of English military archery were developed using relatively light bows. Representations of bows and arrows in the later fourteenth century, reflecting the popular perception of archery equipment, also show the development of the longbow as the most commonly used bow in all contexts.

A greater number of specialised types of arrowhead developed in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries. Some of the military types have been mentioned, but this was also very apparent in hunting. In the thirteenth century barbed heads seem to have progressively become the dominant form of hunting arrowhead, replacing the earlier triangular or diamond-shaped heads. One case of poaching that happened in Weybridge Forest in August 1251 clearly shows this process. The walking foresters were keeping watch at night for poachers. A groups appeared who, when the foresters challenged them, shot arrows at them to cover their escape. The foresters collected the arrows as evidence and they are described in the court record as three barbed (*barbatas*) and three unbarbed (*genderatus*).[72]

If the portrayals of bulbous or wide-curved nocks are not just part of artistic convention, then the fourteenth century was also a time of change at this end of the arrow as well. Stringers, an often overlooked craft in archery studies, seem to have become more widely skilled in making strong thin strings. This may have arisen from wider knowledge of the techniques used in making bowstrings for elite archers both noble and professional benefitting the ordinary archer. It may have reflected more deliberate growing of the hemp plant for string manufacture. Orders for bowstrings made on behalf of Edward III and the Black Prince in the 1340s and 1350s mention Staffordshire, Rugeley in particular, as a source of bowstrings, possibly reflecting this sort of specialization.[73]

This development among Stringers is part of the rise of the archery crafts. Bowyers and Fletchers become much more commonly recorded as the fourteenth century passes. With the rise in the population of England through the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries up to the Black Death, there would have been an increasing market for bows and arrows for use in the popular archery tradition. The Assizes of Arms would have encouraged this as did the increasing use of military archers. An international trade in bowstaves developed to support the archery crafts. Initially it was the dedicated archers including the foresters, parkers and hunters who might have benefitted from this but by the end of the fourteenth century English military archery relied on this international trade.

Notes

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14 *The Lutterell Psalter* (facsimile) commentary by M.P. Brown (British Museum, 2006) pp.22–4
15 *The Lutterell Psalter* (2006) p.13
16 Jessop, O. (2002) pp.192–202
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18 This style of arrow is not found only in English manuscripts of the first four decades of the fourteenth century. An early fourteenth-century mural of six saints in the Church of San Giovanni and Reperata in Lucca shows Sebastian holding a small bundle of arrows. These have shield-shaped fletches and small barbed heads and nocks made up of an semi-circular piece to hold the string. Again there is an apparent join line. A painting in the same church by Domenico Ghizlandaio of the Madonna and Child and four saints is perhaps 150 years later shows Sebastian holding an arrow which has long triangular fletches and a slot nock cut into a straight arrow shaft of the type we would think of as normal today
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X

What Drove the Rise of the English Longbowman?

The various ways people used bows and arrows in their battles between the Norman Conquest and the Black Death. Sometimes their activities are lost to history because of the lack of records, at other times the royal administration may have discouraged popular archery either deliberately or by neglect. But an English tradition of popular archery existed throughout the period.

Much has been made of the Anglo Norman experience of archery in their wars against the Welsh and its influence on the development of military archery in England. The Norman kings and Marcher Lords gained control of large parts of Southern Wales through conquest and alliance by the middle of the twelfth century. Then they used the archery skills of their new tenants and allies in their assault on Ireland. Part of the reason why the Southern Welsh archery skills have been emphasised is because of the graphic accounts of its effectiveness left us by Giraldus Cambrensis. Meanwhile there is evidence of archery skills developing in the English border counties, or more likely being discovered and exploited by the Anglo Norman rulers. But as accounts of military archery in Stephen's reign make clear, there was an active English archery tradition at the same time as the Welsh archers were impinging on the Anglo Normans. But it is probable that the Welsh contribution to the development of military archery was to demonstrate the effectiveness of more powerful bows than were commonly used in the contemporary English tradition. At the same time, the Battle of the Standard strongly suggests that there was a tradition of archery in Northern England, probably encouraged by two centuries of Norse influence, and more centuries of warfare with the Scots. While the Norsemen did not make extensive use of military archery, they understood the value of archery. Their tradition of

archery may well have concentrated more on longbow use, since there are tenth-century finds of longbows from Hedeby in Norway and Ballinderry in Ireland.[1]

After King John lost the wealthiest parts of his cross-Channel kingdom to Philip Augustus of France military tactics in England developed surprisingly slowly. Despite the rapid expansion of both the types of weapons and the social classes included in the Assizes of Arms under Henry III it took until the end of the thirteenth century for the beginnings of the English tactical system became apparent. Edward I tended to use archers in the same way that William I and Stephen had: to provide general harassing or covering fire and to weaken bodies of stalwart infantry until the mailed horsemen could destroy them. That is men that might turn a battle their way rather than win it outright. The battles of the Standard in 1138 and Boroughbridge in 1322 are much more significant stages in the development of military practice in England. In both these battles, the small numbers of knights present dismounted to stiffen the infantry line while relatively large numbers of archers were placed in and around the front line to rebuff the oncoming enemy with arrow shot. But, for as long as the Norman and Plantagenet kings kept their focus mainly on Continental European matters, military practice continued to follow the Continental tradition with knights and mailed horsemen being the masters of the battlefield. As a result, the lessons of the Battle of the Standard were largely forgotten until the thirteenth century when a solution had to be found to a major military problem. England was no longer able to raise the numbers of mailed horsemen necessary to match those that could be raised in France and the German states.

The thirteenth century was the key period for the development of popular archery in England. Henry III and Edward I progressively extended the reach of the Assizes of Arms to include men from more social groups. Between 1230 and 1285 the duty of arms ownership for peacekeeping and military service was extended to include both free and serfs, so that by 1285 no healthy non noble layman aged between 16 and 60 was specifically excluded. Significantly, the most numerous groups were those that were expected to have bows and arrows. This was the time when the major official recognition and encouragement of archery happened; and by doing so it marked the recognition that an English tradition of popular archery existed. Edward III's 1363 proclamation requiring archery practice only had force because the bow had been established as the legally required weapon of a majority of the population in the previous century. But a century earlier Henry III's advisers must have discerned some level of interest in archery among the population of England when they added bows and arrows

to the weapon types required by the Assizes of Arms. The reach and influence of the medieval kings of England was not sufficiently powerful that they could make men take up weapons that they had no interest in. This became apparent in the second half of the thirteenth century when Edward I was disappointed by the number and quality of knights coming forward in answer to his summons. While in part this had an economic cause, knightly arms were not cheap, there was also an element of weariness and resentment with Edward's demands since he was at war so often. But it shows very clearly that it was difficult to force men to take up arms if they felt it was against their interests.

The main reason Henry III expanded the scope of the Assizes of Arms was the need to increase the pool of competent men available to recruit English armies from. With the loss of many of the his European lands, and resulting loss of both revenue and manpower, Henry and his advisers were left in a weak position in comparison with the king of France. So they had to look more closely at the potential military resources available in England. This led them to begin to include the English tradition of archery and so undo Henry II's omission, after he had left archery out of his English Assize of Arms in 1181. They might well have remembered the 'foundation myth' of the Norman and Plantagenet kings of England, that an archer struck the fatal blow at the Battle of Hastings, they may have recalled the effectiveness of archery in Henry I's and Stephen's reigns as well as that of the Welsh archers. So they probably felt that the inclusion of military archery would help to balance the relative lack of mailed horsemen. The staged inclusion of archery in the Assizes of Arms may show that the royal administration didn't realise initially the potential of the English tradition of archery to provide fighting men, and in particular were ignorant of the amount of archery practised by the peasantry, both free and unfree. Although there is very little evidence of archery as a sport in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, what little there is shows that members of the population at large enjoyed archery. While they were nowhere near as widespread and numerous as was the case in the late fourteenth, fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, they showed that popular archery existed. Whatever their motives, Henry III and his advisers could hardly have foreseen the fearsome power that the archers of England and Wales would bring to European battlefields in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

But one question remains: why did the Henry III and Edward I encourage military archery through their Assizes of Arms and the Statute of Westminster in the thirteenth century? Contemporary experiences of powerful infantry in North Wales, Scotland and Continental Europe all demonstrated the effectiveness of steady bodies

of pike armed infantry. They could resist and even defeat mailed cavalry, the 'battlefield kings' of the time. Infantry armed with close-quarters weapons such as swords axes and shields found bodies of pike-armed men very difficult to defeat. Perhaps more importantly, steady pike-armed infantry could be raised and trained much more quickly than effective military archers regardless of whether the archers were using, shorter bows, longbows or crossbows. So why didn't the English kings and their military advisors take the easier and more widely followed path and develop pike armed infantry? It was a sort of medieval military 'scissors, paper, stone'. Good numbers of archers could negate pike-armed infantry and menace the horses at least of mailed cavalry. Pike-armed infantry could negate mailed horse but not archers. Infantry armed with close quarters weapons were not decisive forces in armies of the period because they were vulnerable to both mailed horse and archers. Mailed horse could negate unprotected archers (as the Scots managed at Bannockburn) and disordered pike-armed infantry. If the archers were protected by either infantry, including dismounted knights as at the Battle of the Standard or by mounted knights as at Falkirk they could to all intents and purposes win the battle. In addition to these abilities, archers were very useful as garrison troops, and light infantry for foraging and harassing the enemy. Looked at in these terms the real question becomes why was it only among the English and Welsh (and some English ruled lands like Gascony) that large numbers of men developed the ability to use increasingly heavy hand bows in war? This is particularly surprising since Henry II's Assize of Arms issued in Le Mans in 1180 allowed those men belonging to the lowest income group included the option of having bows and arrows. I believe that the robust tradition of popular archery in England and Wales is part of the explanation.

When did longbow archery become the dominant form of archery in England and Wales? The evidence recounted in this book makes it clear that shorter bows, between about 4 and 5ft in length, were in widespread use up to the middle of the fourteenth century at least. The most telling evidence comes from two legal reports mentioning bows and ell and a half in length (about 54in or 1.37m in length) and various illustrations. At the same time, direct evidence of longbows about two ells or yards in length also comes from other legal reports. Ireland has provided archaeological evidence of complete bows of both lengths; a shorter bow from twelfth-century Waterford and a longbow from late tenth-century Ballinderry. Yet by the start of the fifteenth century at the latest it is very difficult to find any trace of shorter bows still being use. They may well have been but longbows were the predominant form by then. Longbows are more demanding

on the bowyer who has to find and work longer staves, and on the archer, who will have to master the long draw, and likely greater draw weight of the bow. The benefit is greater power in the arrow, and, vitally from the point of view of military archery, greater weight in the arrow and arrowstrike.

Evidence begins to emerge in the last two decades of the thirteenth century onwards of significant activities which point to deliberate development of the power of the bow used in England. It is possible that the archer freeman of York, Robert of Werdale made a small contribution to this change to the use of longbows in war, but we have no proof. This is a significant period in English military history since it marks the time when the Statute of Winchester completed the legal recognition of the English tradition of archery begun fifty years earlier. This royal encouragement of archery begins to be complimented by the development of an archery equipment industry in England. The earliest clear records of the import of bowstaves come from this time. The existence of craftsmen bowyers is confirmed in the records of expenditure on bows by royal officers for selected men that also comes from these decades. In the case of these purchase records the prices paid for the bows in the 1280s was the same as that paid by Edward III's administration in the 1340s, implying a particular standard of bow was required. Evidence of this trend to more powerful bows also comes from stratified finds of arrowheads, where arrowheads with a socket diameter of at least 10mm become more common in the late thirteenth century and into the fourteenth century, demonstrating the more widespread use of heavy bows.

There is one piece of clear evidence of how and when long-draw bows that could be drawn to at least 30in, like those found on the *Mary Rose*, came to be the standard for military archery. It is a royal order made in 1338 to Nicholas Caraud, the King's Artillier. He was instructed 'to buy 4000 sheaves of arrows of an ell in length with steel heads.'[2] There would be no need for arrows a yard long if they were not going to be shot from longbows. As the Waterford bow and the description of John of Tylton's bow and arrow show, bows around an ell and a half (c.54in or 1.37m) in length, shot arrows of around 26–27in (66–68cm) in length. Edward III was determined that the archers in his armies would have powerful bows, this was why the English and Welsh archers shattered the French armies. The first half of the fourteenth century was a time of significant technological change in the archery equipment used in the English tradition of archery. Long-draw bows became the norm; heavier arrows evidenced by arrowheads with larger socket diameters became the norm; stringers became more skilled at making strong thin strings that no longer required arrows to have bulbous nocks. Evidence of the way the royal

administration drove these changes in the fourteenth century can also be found in the increasing number of records of imports of bowstaves including Edward II's order for Spanish yew bows in the 1320s. By the 1340s the royal administration was issuing substantial orders for bows and arrows which give no measurements for the bows and arrows required. This suggests that bowyers and fletchers knew what the king expected by this time.

But this was also the time when the *Luttrell Psalter* showed some men shooting shorter bows at the butts. A reasonable deduction from all this is that the Royal standard for military bows was the longbow, and that this standard brought about a shift in the English archery culture to almost total practice with the longbow in the second half of the fourteenth century. This change might explain in part the complaints of both Edward II and Edward III between 1315 and the 1340s that the Arrayers were dilatory, corrupt and sending feeble, poorly equipped archers to muster.[3] While the Arrayers may have been both dilatory and corrupt, they may also have been sending archers equipped with shorter bows like those shown in the *Luttrell Psalter* and other illustrations; men who were competent enough with shorter bows, but who struggled with the longbows in use in the royal armies.

How active and pervasive was the English tradition of archery? It is difficult to find much trace of it before the beginning of the thirteenth century, except for military archery mainly in Stephen's reign, particularly the Battle of the Standard. This lack of evidence arises for two main reasons: lack of records and a general tendency to restrict the activities of much of the population through a rigid understanding of the significance of free and unfree status. Once Henry III started to erode this separation by including unfree men in the Assize of Arms, the wider tradition of archery was brought forward into national significance. The thirteenth century marks the time in history when written records increased enormously in number which gives us so much more information about the practice of archery in England. Much of this information is peripheral, just recording the ownership and use of bows and arrows. As such it provides illumination of the practice of archery by Englishmen of the time in a way that a tract from an enthusiast does not. The ordinariness of some of the records illuminates a tradition of archery among ordinary men which was the foundation of the near legendary skills and reputation of the English and Welsh archers in the coming decades.

Magna Carta and the Forest Charter restricted the physical penalties that could be exacted for offences against the aw in general and Forest Law in particular. This meant that more of the men engaged in illegal activities in the royal forests with bows and arrows survived to repeat

their offences and develop their skills. Since the forests covered maybe a quarter of England in the thirteenth century, this was likely to be quite a large number of men. Moreover the vast increase in the number of private parks presented even more opportunities for men to practice archery illegally. In addition, the forests and parks provided opportunities for men with archery skills to gain good work as foresters, parkers and hunters. It is difficult to know how many foresters and foresters' men used archery skills in their work in the royal forests, but given the number and size of the forests 1,000 would be the likely minimum. As has been noted above there were perhaps 3,200 private parks in the early fourteenth century, meaning at least 3,200 skilled archers could have been employed as parkers and hunters. In addition to these men there would have been a good number of men employed as hunters full or part time by noble and gentry households both lay and clerical. All these made up an elite in terms of skill, almost certainly men capable of using powerful longbows. Writs of summons and the pay records for Edward I's Welsh and Scottish campaigns show larger numbers of archers being required than could have been supplied from this skilled group. He expected men who were conforming to the demands of the Assizes of Arms and the Statute of Winchester to come to his armies. These men would have had more variable levels of skill and quality of equipment and it is quite likely that many of them used shorter bows, 4 to 5ft in length. But as their achievements proved these bows were effective.

Huntsmen in England, regardless of class were more likely to practise bow and stable hunting than par force hunting. It is noteworthy that this was not just the case among the English before the Conquest but was also generally true in the reigns of the Norman and Plantagenet kings. The 'Laws of Cnut' noted above allowed all men the right to hunt on their land encouraging and acknowledging popular hunting before the Conquest which in turn suggests the existence of a popular archery tradition in England. After the imposition of Forest Law by William I this tradition was repressed, particularly where it related to hunting. Although the vast extent of the royal forests under the Norman and Plantagenet kings meant that forestry and hunting continued to provide employment opportunities for archers whether English or Norman. But when Magna Carta and the associated Forest Charter banned the imposition of ferocious physical penalties for illegal hunting in the royal forests in the first quarter of the thirteenth century popular archery grew. The importance of hunting to this growth of popular archery should not be underestimated.

When bows were used in illegal activities including poaching they seem to have been used by people from a wide range of social and

economic groups. Many of the cases noted above were perpetrated by ordinary men and make clear that men carried bows at all sorts of times, not just when they were expecting trouble. This is made particularly clear in the cases where an unstrung bow was used as a club. But in the reports of both poaching and other illegal activities bows were used in a minority of cases. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, bows became more commonly used in crimes, reflecting the greater number of men practising archery in these later centuries. Before the fourteenth century it is fair to suggest that archery was a minority pastime.

I believe that there was a blossoming of popular archery in the thirteenth century and that this led to there being enough competent archers for Edward III to achieve great things in his wars. By doing so he ensured that popular archery became a defining characteristic of life in medieval England.

Notes

1 Hedeby bow see Strickland, M. and Hardy R. (2005) p.55; Ballinderry bow see Halpin, A. (1997) p.54
2 *Calendar of Patent Rolls* 1338–40, p.124
3 Wadge, R. (2007) p.32

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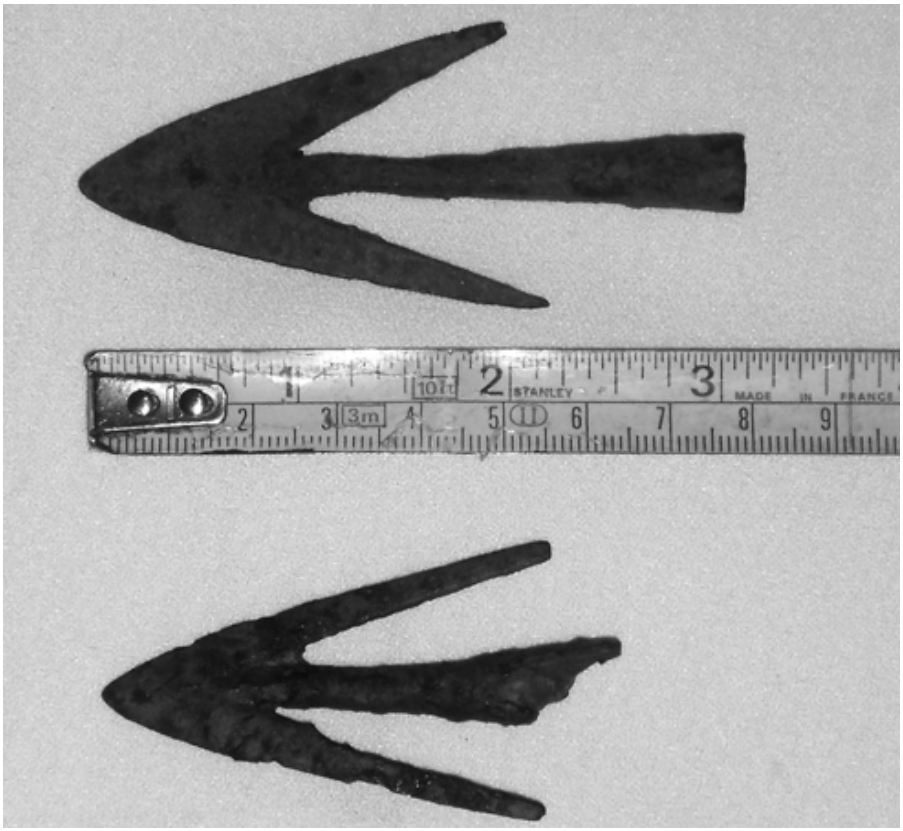
Plates

A misericord in Gloucester Cathedral, *c*.1350, depicting a hunter shooting a stag. From his clothing he was an ordinary man. He may be a forester or hunter since he is using a long bow in contrast with the length of bows used by archers on other contemporary misericords at Gloucester and Ely Cathedral. He uses a two-fingered draw and has three or four arrows tucked in his belt. (© The author with kind permission of the Chapter of Gloucester Cathedral)

Detail of the misericord showing the arrows. The arrowheads seem to be barbed and the nocks of the arrows are wider than the arrow shaft and curved to fit around the bowstring. (© The author with kind permission of the Chapter of Gloucester Cathedral)



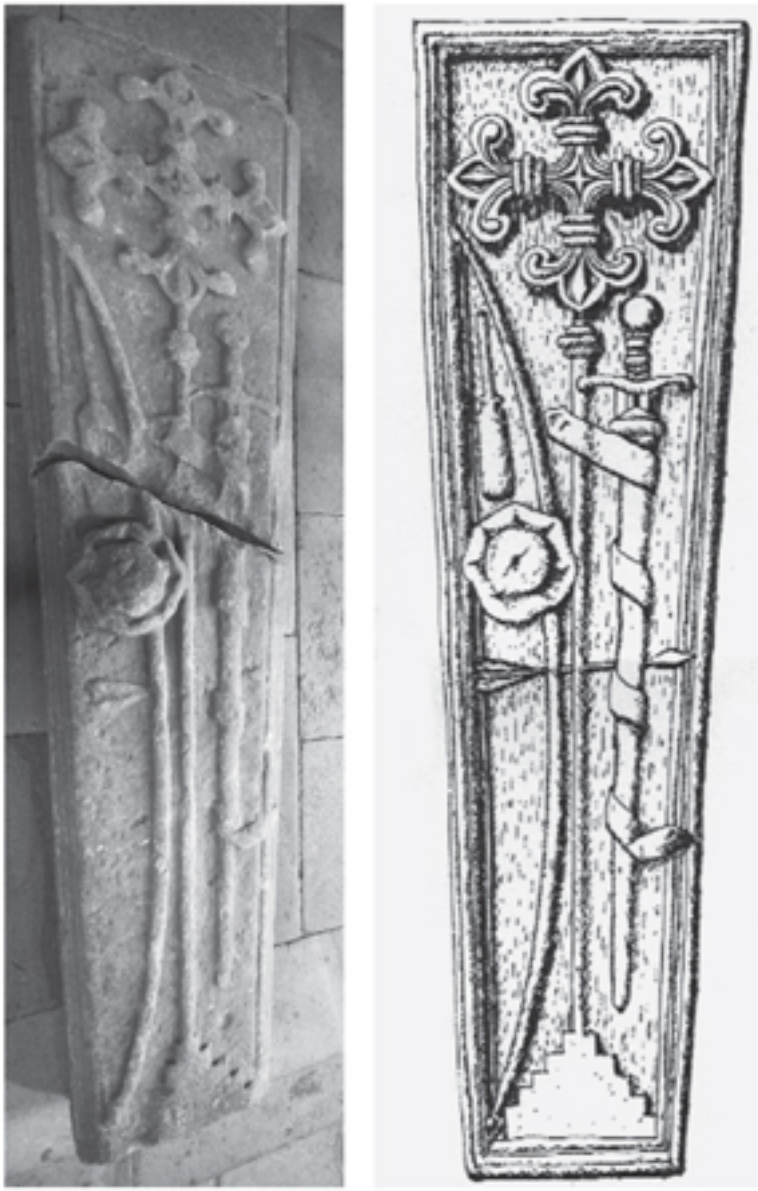
Thirteenth-century barbed arrowheads. These were effective but not made to the highest standard; the socket ‘wrap over’ is untidy on the best preserved example. The socket diameter of this arrowhead is *c*.8mm so used with relatively light bows. (© The author)

Military arrowheads from Helmsley Castle, dating from the twelfth to early fourteenth century. These are examples of the M7 and M8 types designed to go through chainmail. They were commonly used until the early fourteenth century when the increased use of plate armour rendered them ineffective. (© The author)

An archer on a door pillar on the outside of the west end of Lincoln Cathedral, thirteenth century. Although the representation has been distorted to fit the pillar, three things are clear: the inclusion of an archer suggests that popular archery was thriving in Lincoln; the archer is an ordinary man from his (limited?) clothing; and there don't seem to be true nocks on the bow since the string is wrapped around the bow tips. Very tentatively, if the way he is drawing the bow represents a technique of the time, it might explain how the bulbous or almost cup-like nocks shown in some manuscript illustrations were

used. (© The author and Professor D.C. Rae)

A tile from the Chapter House of Westminster Abbey, *c.*1255, one of a pair which show a hunter shooting a stag. He is using a short self bow, maybe a yard and a half in length. His social status is unclear, but he was not noble from his clothing. He is using a quiver and a two-fingered draw. The arrow nocks seem to flare wider than the arrowshafts. (© The Dean and Chapter of Westminster Abbey)



A graveslab in Durham Cathedral. *c.*1300. It is that of a forester, possibly Gilbert de Scaresbeck, Chief Forester to two Bishops of Durham. (© Courtesy of the Chapter of Durham Cathedral and the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne)

A Laburnam bow very similar in length to many bows used in the eleventh to thirteenth centuries. Despite its relatively short length it will draw to *c*.28in (71cm) and send an 0.3–0.35in (8–9mm) arrow over 150 yards (137m). Thanks to Lars Persson of the English Warbow Society. (© The author)

The view of a deer park at Helmsley Castle showing how deer parks could provide spectator sport. The walled garden is a later development taking over some of the deer park. This park was in existence by 1302. (© The author)

Graffitto from Gloucester Cathedral, dating from the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century (both original and overdraw). This graffito is on a doorway on the south side of the choir. Since the archer wears a crown it would be nice to think that it was a sketch of the young Edward III who had much to do with Gloucester Cathedral in the 1330s overseeing building works associated with his father's tomb. But the style of the archer's clothes and shoes and his short hair suggest a later date. Note the bracer. Thanks to Patrick O'Donovan and Andy Hall. (© The author with kind permission of the Chapter of

Gloucester Cathedral)

A church wall painting from Bishopsbourne, Kent, showing the martyrdom of St Edmund, dating from the first half of the fourteenth century. The archers have very lumpy self bows maybe as long as themselves, used with a relatively short draw. (© A. Marshall & www.paintedchurches.org)

Church wall painting from Stoke Dry, Leicestershire, dating from the first half of the fourteenth century. Less realistically drawn bows may be as long as the archers. (© A. Marshall & www.paintedchurches.org)

Church wall painting from Weare Gifford, Devon, showing the martyrdom of St Sebastian, dating from the late fourteenth century. Very definite longbows are depicted being shot in the more energetic style required to shoot warbows. The change of bow style and shooting style reflect changes in the tradition of archery in the fourteenth century. (© The author)

A scene from *Queen Mary's Psalter* (1310–20) depicting a hunter, archer and dogs, a hunting team for bow and stable hunting. The horseman would find the deer and coax them towards the archer. The dogs may be greyhounds used to pull down wounded deer. The archer is obviously an ordinary man who may not even have shoes. But for all that he has a good looking self longbow and three arrows in his belt. (© The British Library)

A scene from *The Luttrell Psalter* (1310–40) depicting an archer stringing a bow and a crossbowman spanning a crossbow. The archer is bracing his longbow with a looped string. While the arrow is exaggerated in size all the detail is there including the fletchings whipped with red thread. The crossbowman is spanning his ‘one foot’ crossbow with a belt hook. (© The British Library)

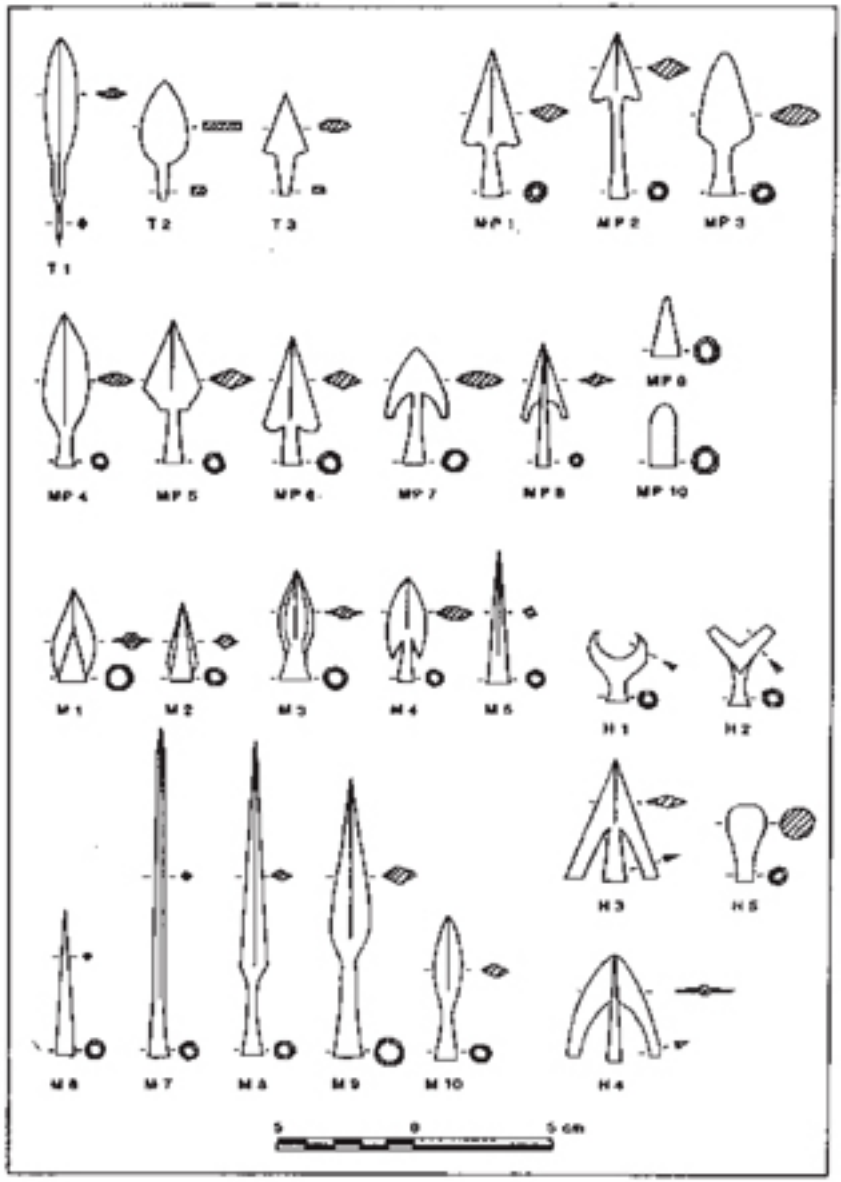
A scene from *The Luttrell Psalter* (1310–40), a famous depiction of peasants practising archery at a butt. All their archery equipment is shown in some detail, including the bows, some of which seem to be shorter than true longbows as might be expected at this point in the fourteenth century. (© The British Library)

Detail of a misericord in Ely Cathedral. *c*.1340. Tshis archer has just shot a deer which is being comforted by St Giles in the main carving of the misericord. His bow and arrows are well observed by the carver. The archer has a shortish bow and three arrows in his belt which have heads that could just be called barbed. Hints of the whipping on the fletches can be seen. (© The author with kind

permission of the Chapter of Ely Cathedral)

Detail of a misericord in Ely Cathedral. *c*.1340. This archer has just shot a deer which is being comforted by St Giles in the main carving of the misericord. His bow and arrows are well observed by the carver. The archer has a shortish bow and three arrows in his belt which have heads that could just be called barbed. Hints of the whipping on the fletches can be seen. (© The author with kind permission of the Chapter of Ely Cathedral)

Detail of a misericord in Ely Cathedral, *c.*1340. A companion archer on the right side of the main carving of St Giles. The bowstring can be seen in more detail than is possible with the other archer. Again details of the arrow fletches can be seen. (© The author with kind permission of the Chapter of Gloucester Cathedral)



Typology of Medieval English Arrowheads. (O. Jessop, 'A new type of artefact typology for the study of medieval arrowheads', *Medieval Archaeology*, vol.40, 2002, pp.192–205. © Maney Publishing. www.maney.co.uk/journals/med)

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